

ALASKA PYS 2022-2023 (MOD)

## CONTENTS

Alaska PYs 2022-2023 (Mod).....	1
I. WIOA State Plan Type and Executive Summary.....	3
a. WIOA State Plan Type.....	3
Combined Plan Partner Program(s).....	3
b. Plan Introduction or Executive Summary.....	3
II. Strategic Elements .....	4
a. Economic, Workforce, and Workforce Development Activities Analysis.....	4
b. State Strategic Vision and Goals .....	32
c. State Strategy.....	36
III. Operational Planning Elements.....	44
a. State Strategy Implementation.....	44
b. State Operating Systems and Policies .....	55
IV. Coordination with State Plan Programs.....	78
V. Common Assurances (For All Core Programs).....	79
VI. Program-Specific Requirements for Core Programs.....	80
Program-specific Requirements for Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Activities under Title I-B.....	80
Program-Specific Requirements for Wagner-Peyser Program (Employment Services) .....	106
Program-specific Requirements for Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Programs..	119
Program-Specific Requirements for Vocational Rehabilitation (Combined or General) .....	135
VII. Program-Specific Requirements for Combined State Plan Partner Programs .....	215
Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) .....	215
Performance Indicator Appendix .....	229
All WIOA Core Programs .....	229
Additional Indicators of Performance .....	229
Other Appendices .....	230

## I. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### A. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE

This is a combined plan

#### COMBINED PLAN PARTNER PROGRAM(S)

Senior Community Service Employment program (programs authorized under title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.))

### B. PLAN INTRODUCTION OR EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Plan Overview**

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is the federal program that funds state and local workforce initiatives and provides a variety of job training services for adults and youth. WIOA modernizes and streamlines the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and was created to allow states more flexibility in collaborating across systems to better address the employment and skills needs of employees, jobseekers, and employers. WIOA stresses the importance of education, training, credentials, and skills; helping people with barriers to employment; meeting the needs of employers; increasing the success and economic self-sufficiency of workers; and aligning workforce development with education and economic development. In Alaska, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) is the state agency designated to receive WIOA funds and implement its provisions. The hallmarks of the WIOA legislation are:

- The needs of businesses and workers drive workforce solutions, and local boards are accountable to the communities in which they are located;
- Job Centers provide excellent customer service to jobseekers and employers by focusing on continuous improvement; and
- The workforce system supports strong regional economies and plays an active role in community and workforce development.

#### **Alaska's Four-year Plan**

WIOA requires states to submit a four-year workforce plan to the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL). This document is the 2022-2023 update to the four-year workforce plan for 2020 – 2023, as required by WIOA.

The writing of this updated strategic workforce development plan is a major opportunity for the Alaska DOLWD to develop new strategies while emphasizing sector partnerships, career pathways, cross-program data and measurement, and job-driven investments. The Alaska WIOA Combined Plan describes the workforce development system that Alaskans want and explains how Alaska is using WIOA and other state and federal programs to achieve its vision of providing multiple pathways to high skill, high wage jobs and careers, and access to the education, training, and support services needed to prepare for and participate in high-demand occupations that pay family-sustaining wages.

#### **Public comment period**

The plan was presented for public comment from February 15, 2022, to March 1, 2022. Announcement of the public comment period was made through the state's online public notices system (Welcome - Alaska Online Public Notices (state.ak.us)). Public comments were collected by email. The plan was sent electronically to stakeholder groups that provided public comment, including Alaska Native organizations, chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, economic development entities, community-based organizations, adult and youth

education and workforce development providers, institutions of higher education, disability service entities, youth-serving programs, veterans' service organizations, juvenile justice specialists, senior employment programs, individuals with disabilities, and the public. The Plan update represents the culmination of this public input process.

### **Combined Plan**

The plan's Strategic Elements section provides the current and projected workforce picture, as well as the state's workforce vision and goals. The Operational Planning Elements section clarifies ongoing implementation of the strategic elements in day-to-day operations, followed by sections specific to each core and partner program. The WIOA plan follows the question-and-answer format provided by the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education.

At the end of the entire narrative portion of the plan, Appendix 1 shows the Performance Goals for the Core Programs and the Partner Program (Senior Community Service Employment Program). Appendix 2.1 contains a list of acronyms used in the plan; and Appendix 2.2 lists Alaska's One-Stop partners.

## **II. STRATEGIC ELEMENTS**

### **A. ECONOMIC, WORKFORCE, AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS**

#### **1. ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS**

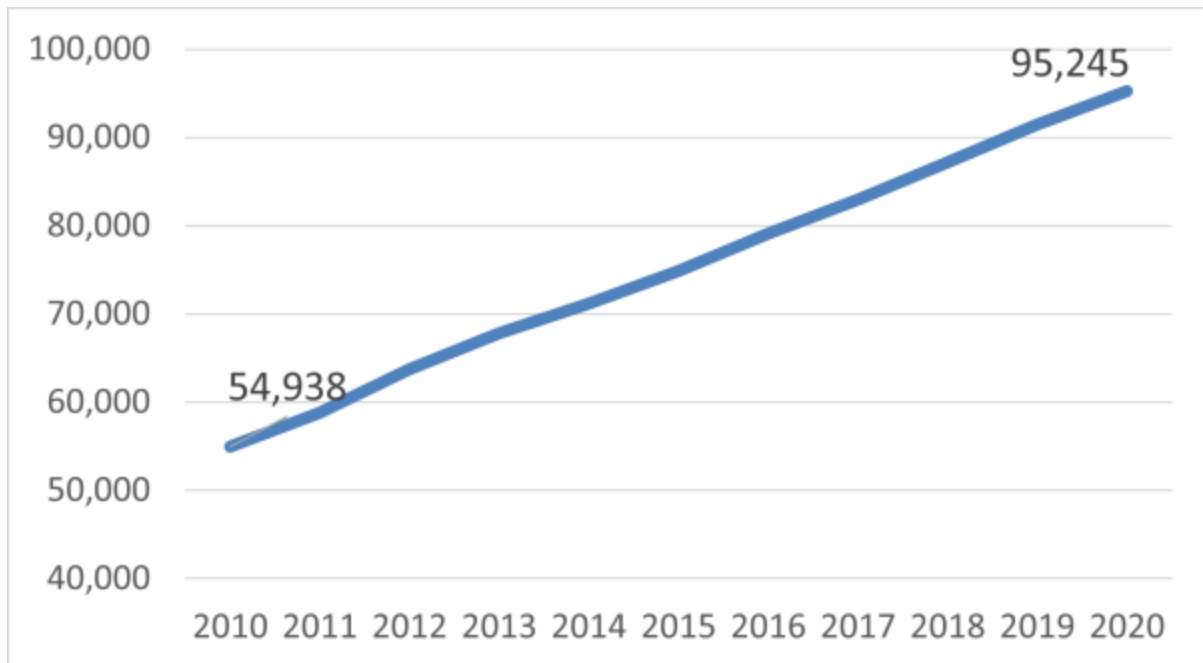
##### **Alaska's Overall Economic Conditions and Key Trends**

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted state, national, and international economies in unfamiliar ways and by unprecedented magnitudes. In early 2020, Alaska's economy shed 14 percent of its total jobs, similar to the 15 percent for the country as a whole.

Many of the lost jobs have been recovered in the subsequent months, but not all. By the end of 2022, Alaska is forecasted to have recovered 97 percent of the losses, although the rate of recovery will differ widely across sectors. Oil and gas, for example, one of the state's most economically important industries, is forecasted to have recovered just 72 percent of the steep COVID-related losses. At the other end of the spectrum, health care's job count has already exceeded pre-COVID-19 levels.

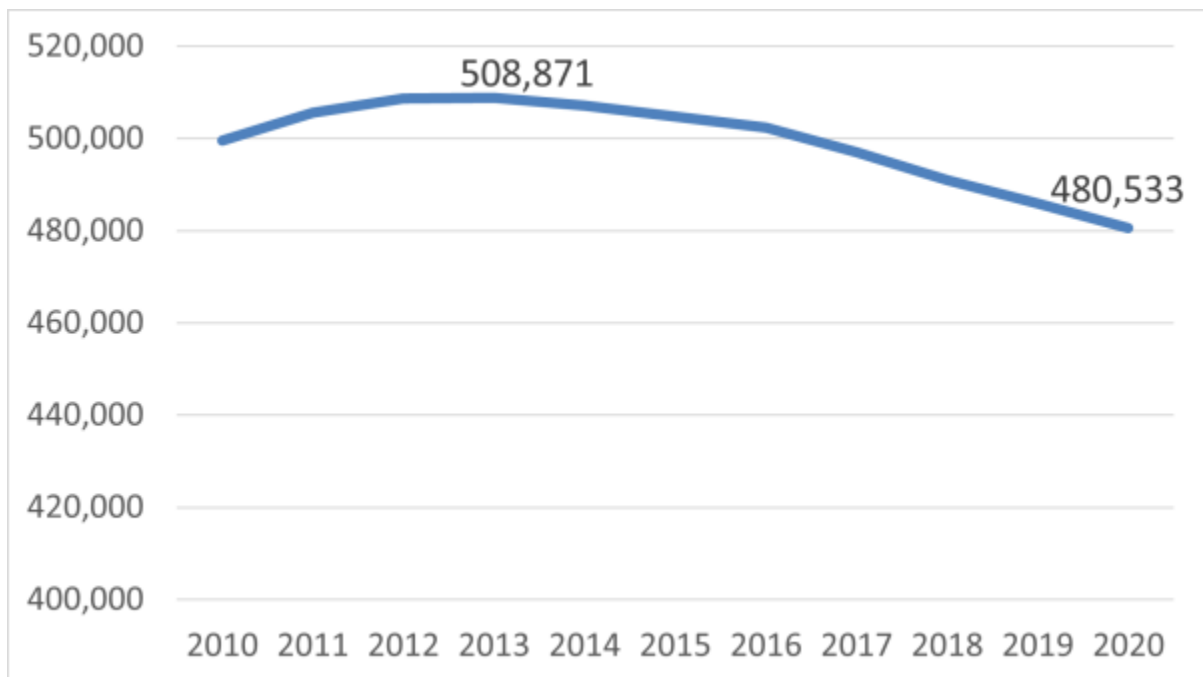
Some of the most challenging and relevant economic questions Alaska faces involve distinguishing COVID-19 factors from the underlying trends in the state's economy and population that pre-date the pandemic. For instance, the much-publicized short supply of workers and job applicants is driven partly by demographic trends that have nothing to do with the pandemic.

From 2010 to 2020, Alaska's 65+ population increased from slightly below 55,000 to more than 95,000, as Figure 1 shows.



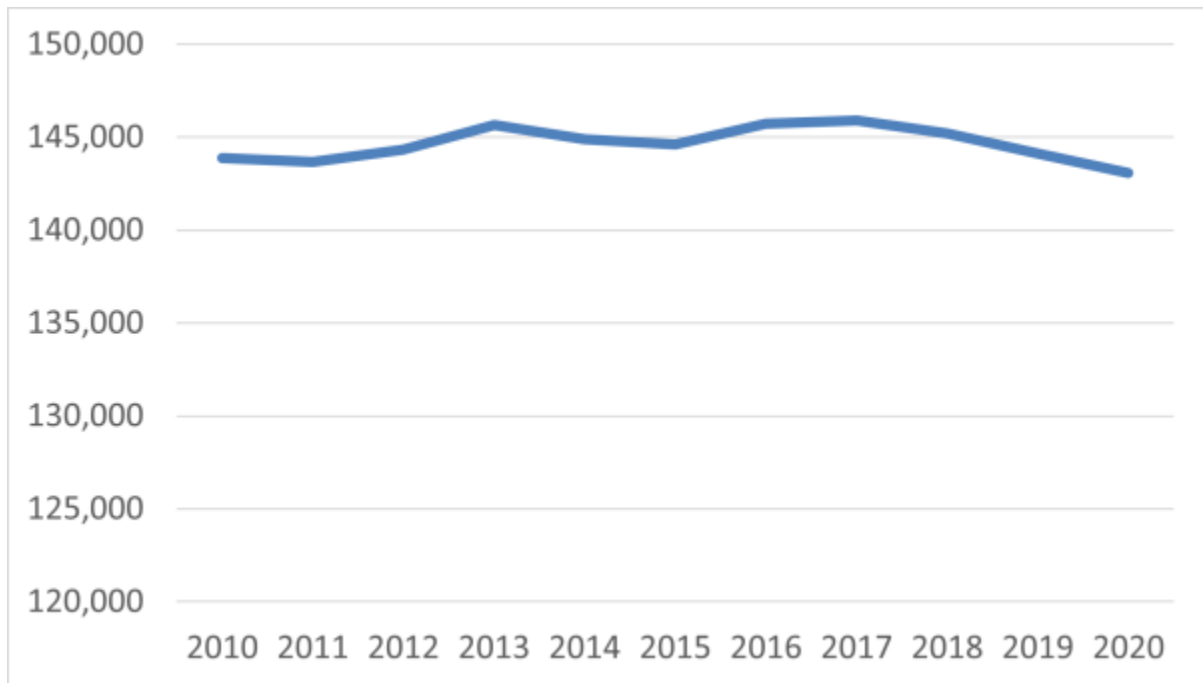
**Figure 1: Alaska Seniors (65+), 2010 - 2020**

That change was notable on its own for the additional demands a growing number of seniors put on health care providers and nursing homes, but more importantly, it was a major factor in a corresponding *decrease* in the number of working-age Alaskans, as shown in Figure 2.



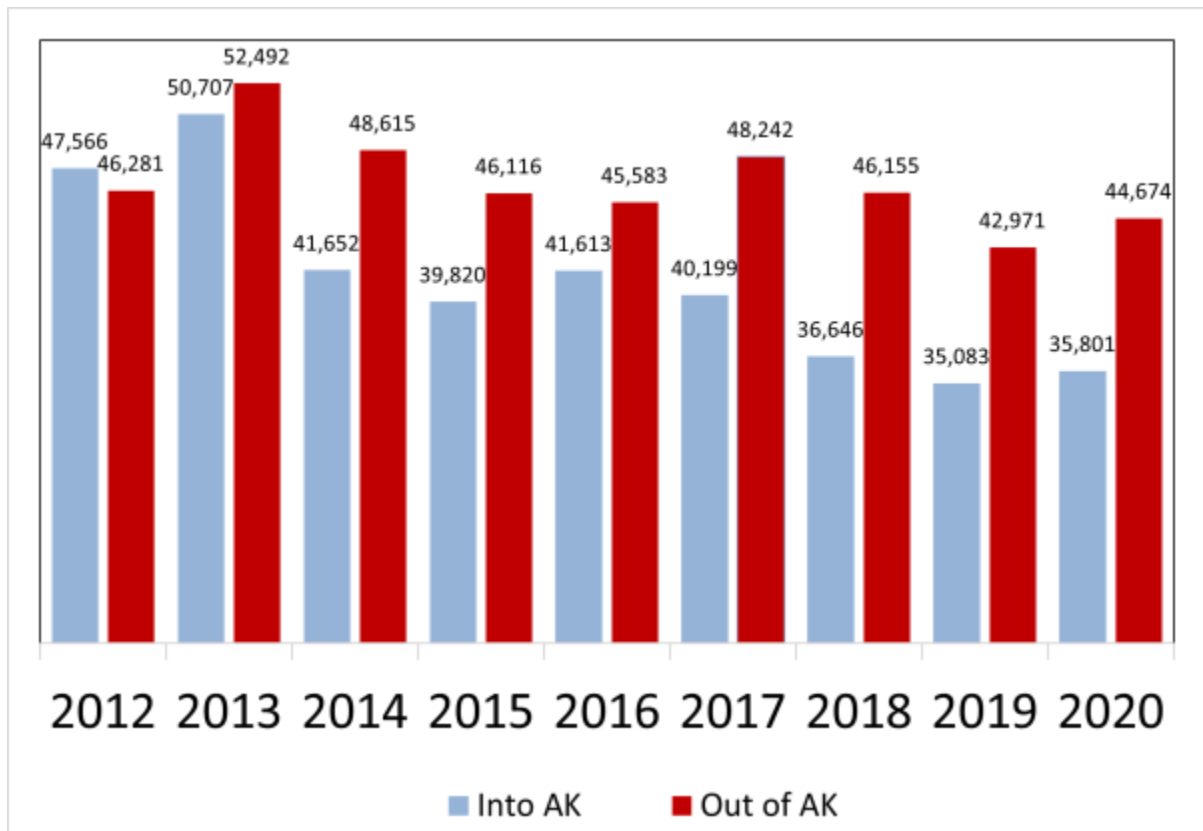
**Figure 2: Working-Age Alaskans (15-64), 2010 - 2020**

Another important demographic trend, shown in Figure 3, is the flat school-age population over the same 2010-2020 period. Alaska's school-age population peaked in the late 1990s and has been flat since, which means no increase in working-age Alaskans is pending from the existing younger population "aging up."



**Figure 3: School-Age Alaskans (5-18), 2010 - 2020**

A final key demographic trend is Alaska's consistent migration losses. Figure 4 demonstrates that Alaska has the largest gross migration flows — the percentage of its population that moved into or out of the state in a given year — of any state.



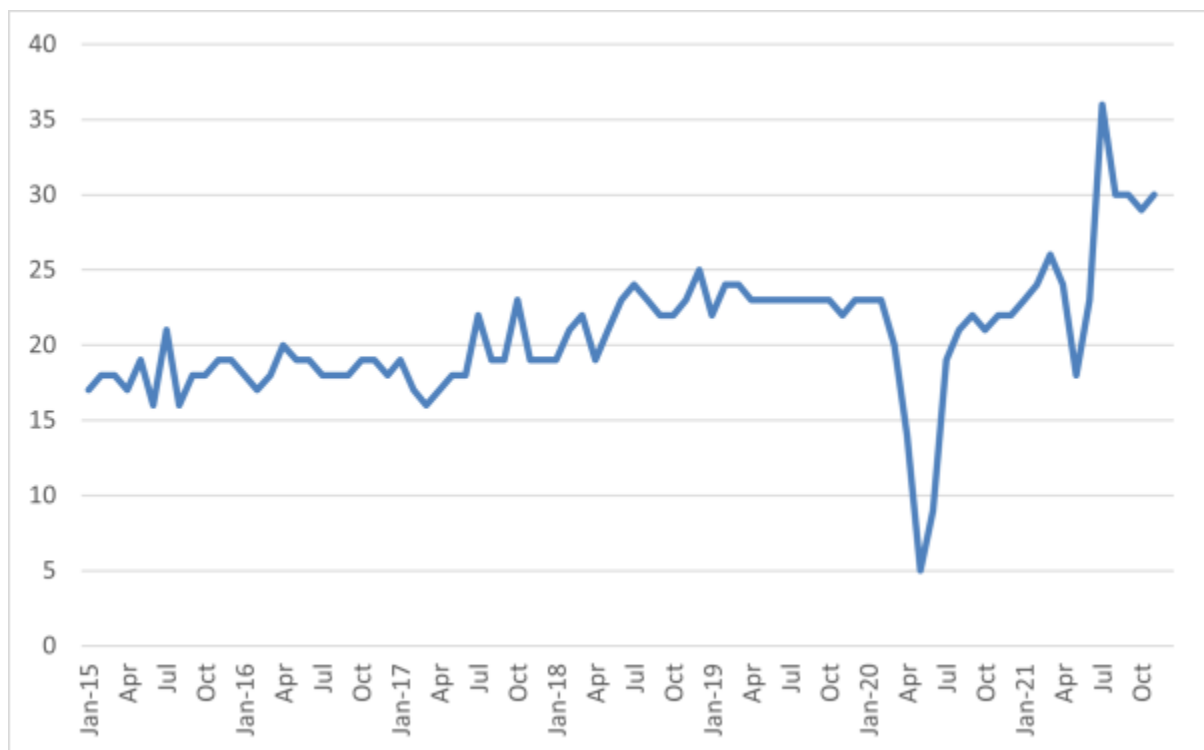
**Figure 4: Alaska Migration, 2012 - 2020**

Since 2014, Alaska has had a net loss from migration flows, which has also played a role in reducing the number of working-age people in the state. In 2020, for example, about 9,000 more people left the state than moved here. At the risk of oversimplifying the reasons, Alaska tends to see net increases or decreases from migration because of the health of its economy *relative* to the broader U.S. economy and in particular the states that are largest and closest (Washington, California, Texas, and Oregon, to name a few that meet one or both of those criteria).

The broad point is that even if COVID-19 had not created new challenges for employers looking to fill open positions, well-established demographic trends would have moved things in that direction.

The pandemic further reduced the number of available workers, at least temporarily. But separating the two, to the degree possible, will help planners understand how much the dramatic imbalance between job openings and applicants will ease when COVID-19's disruptions are mostly behind us.

Anecdotes about the shortage of job applicants and the employers' resulting operational difficulties are everywhere. At the state level, reliable data are scarce, but the best source is a newly available data set from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS), which had previously only reported national numbers. Figure 5 illustrates these data.



**Figure 5: Alaska Job Openings, 2015 - 2021**

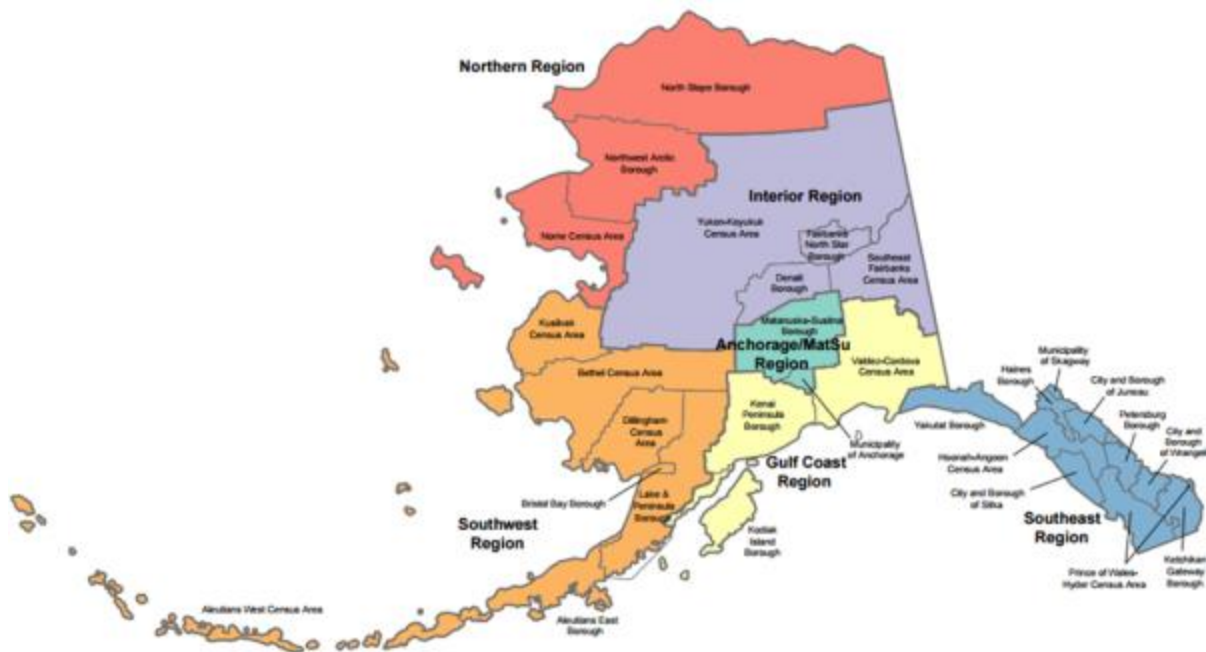
Though volatile, the JOLTS data for Alaska show:

1. The number of job openings from 2015 to early 2020 were on a gradual upward trend, starting at around 17,000 and ending roughly 5,000 higher.

2. COVID-19 and the efforts to reduce its spread dropped job openings to as low as 5,000 in May of 2020 before the number bounced back strongly later in the year to around its pre-pandemic level.
3. Job openings rose briefly to almost double 2015's level and appear to have fallen and stabilized around 30,000, which is still substantially higher than before COVID-19.

### WIOA Area, Planning Region, and Alaska's Six Economic Regions

Alaska has a single local WIOA area, encompassing the entire state. Operationally, however, Alaska includes six state-defined economic regions, which the state uses to collect and analyze labor market information and to inform planning. These economic regions are Anchorage/Mat-Su, Gulf Coast, Interior, Northern, Southeast, and Southwest, as shown in Figure 6.



**Figure 6: Alaska Economic Regions Map**

### Anchorage/Mat-Su Region

The Anchorage/Mat-Su Region is Alaska's population center and one of the only areas where workers commute from one borough to another daily. The mix of employment and industries in the region reflects those across the state, largely because half of the state's population lives there.

High-wage oil industry losses in Anchorage, where the industry's white-collar workers are generally employed, as opposed to the operations employees who are mostly on the North Slope, were substantial from 2015 to 2018 and had rebounded only slightly before COVID-19 drove them to their lowest levels in decades. Deep cuts to the University of Alaska system, whose largest campus is in Anchorage, was another pre-COVID-19 drag on the Anchorage economy.

Longer term, the region's status is tied to the same drivers as the state, including oil and gas, federal government (including the military), and tourism. The region depends less directly on the state's world-class fisheries than other parts of Alaska and more on an air cargo sector that benefits from Anchorage's proximity to Asian markets and good airport facilities and support services.



With few exceptions, Anchorage, and the broader metropolitan area of Anchorage/Mat-Su, employs the same basic mix of workers as other small-to-medium-sized U.S. cities.

### **Gulf Coast and Southeast Regions**

Although parts of the Gulf Coast and Southeast regions are isolated and rural, their mix of jobs don't differ dramatically from statewide trends. Coastal areas have more jobs connected to fishing and fishing-support sectors, maritime transportation, and boat building, for example, but health care has grown wherever there are stable or growing populations. Similarly, the mix of government and private-sector support jobs in retail, hospitality, construction, and transportation doesn't differ markedly among areas with population centers of 10,000 or more.

### **Interior Region**

The Interior Region has a mix of resource industries — large coal and gold mines, for example — and is home to Denali National Park, which generates a substantial number of seasonal jobs and a much smaller number of year-round jobs.

Fairbanks, with a borough population of a little less than 100,000, depends on the military and the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF). The arrival of two new squadrons of F-35 fighter jets to Eielson Air Force Base was one of the bright spots in Alaska's economy in the years before COVID-19, as it created population growth and spurred ongoing residential construction.

Fort Wainwright, an Army post, and Eielson are home to more than 8,400 active-duty military personnel and 10,000 dependents. UAF also plays an important economic role in the region, with a recent enrollment of about 9,000.

### **Northern Region**

The Northern Region is home to most of the state's large oil and gas industry and includes the Red Dog Mine, one of the world's largest zinc mines. As a result, this region benefits from oil, gas, and mining industry jobs as well as the construction and transportation jobs that support these industries.

North Slope workers typically work two weeks on and two weeks off, or some variation that includes an extended period of living and working in or near the oil fields and then an extended period of not working, while living elsewhere in the state or country. A substantial number of food services, health care, and custodial jobs are generated when oil and gas activity increases. Corresponding reductions occur with decreased activity.

For reasons that aren't yet clear, oil and gas employment, which was decimated during the pandemic, has rebounded marginally so far. From a high of 15,000 jobs in 2014, that number dropped with the 2015-18 state recession to about 9,000. Job numbers were creeping back up, hitting about 10,000 in early 2020, before COVID-19 drove them down to 6,100. To date, the industry has only recovered about 1,000 of the 4,000+ jobs lost, spurring questions about the industry's short-term future and whether something structural has changed for the longer term.

Because North Slope work schedules are itinerant, few permanent population centers exist near the oil and gas fields. The Northern Region's largest city is Utqiagvik (formerly Barrow), with a population of about 4,500. Utqiagvik is about 200 miles away from the center of oil field activity and not connected by road.

### **Southwest Region**

The Southwest Region depends heavily on the fishing industry and related maritime activity. The region supplies a large percentage of the nation's total commercial fish harvest by both poundage and value. Bristol Bay sockeye salmon, Bering Sea crab, and pollock represent some of the largest salmon, crab, and whitefish fisheries in the world. Much of the maritime activity is not captured in wage and hourly employment data because permit holders and their crews are

self-employed. This means they typically aren't subject to state unemployment insurance coverage and the mandatory reporting that generates the most reliable employment data.

The employment data do show many seafood processing jobs and a typical mix of government, health care, retail, construction, and hospitality employment that results from economic base industries associated with the area's fisheries.

## i. Existing Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations

Figure 7 shows Alaska's recently published short-term industry forecast.

	Monthly avg, 2020 <sup>1</sup>	Monthly avg, 2021 <sup>1</sup>	Change, 2020-21	Percent change	JOBS FORECAST		
					Monthly avg, 2022	Change, 2021-22	Percent change
<b>Total Nonfarm Employment<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>302,600</b>	<b>309,700</b>	<b>7,100</b>	<b>2.3%</b>	<b>319,500</b>	<b>9,800</b>	<b>3.2%</b>
Total Private	225,800	232,600	6,800	3.0%	241,700	9,100	3.9%
Mining and Logging	11,300	10,400	-900	-8.0%	11,000	600	5.8%
Oil and Gas	7,800	6,700	-1,100	-14.1%	7,100	400	6.0%
Construction	15,800	16,000	200	1.3%	16,400	400	2.5%
Manufacturing	11,900	12,200	300	2.5%	12,800	600	4.9%
Transportation, Trade, and Utilities	58,900	61,000	2,100	3.6%	63,200	2,200	3.6%
Wholesale Trade	6,200	6,100	-100	-1.6%	6,300	200	3.3%
Retail Trade	33,400	34,400	1,000	3.0%	34,900	500	1.5%
Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	19,300	20,500	1,200	6.2%	22,000	1,500	7.3%
Information	4,900	4,800	-100	-2.0%	4,800	0	0%
Financial Activities	10,800	10,800	0	0%	10,900	100	0.9%
Professional and Business Services	26,100	26,300	200	0.8%	26,600	300	1.1%
Educational (private) and Health Services	49,400	50,900	1,500	3.0%	51,500	600	1.2%
Health Care	38,200	39,100	900	2.4%	39,600	500	1.3%
Leisure and Hospitality	26,600	29,700	3,100	11.7%	33,700	4,000	13.5%
Other Services	10,100	10,500	400	4.0%	10,800	300	2.9%
Total Government	76,800	77,100	300	0.4%	77,800	700	0.9%
Federal, except military	15,400	15,100	-300	-1.9%	15,100	0	0%
State, incl. University of Alaska	22,400	22,600	200	0.9%	22,200	-400	-1.8%
Local and tribal, incl. public schools	39,000	39,400	400	1.0%	40,500	1,100	2.8%

<sup>1</sup>Preliminary estimates. <sup>2</sup>Excludes the self-employed, uniformed military, most commercial fishermen, domestic workers, and unpaid family workers.

**Note:** May not sum because of rounding

**Source:** Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

## Figure 7: Alaska Job Outlook by Industry

Over this short horizon, job growth is expected to be strong in the leisure and hospitality sector, which was one of the hardest hit by COVID-19 as well as continuing difficulty finding workers.

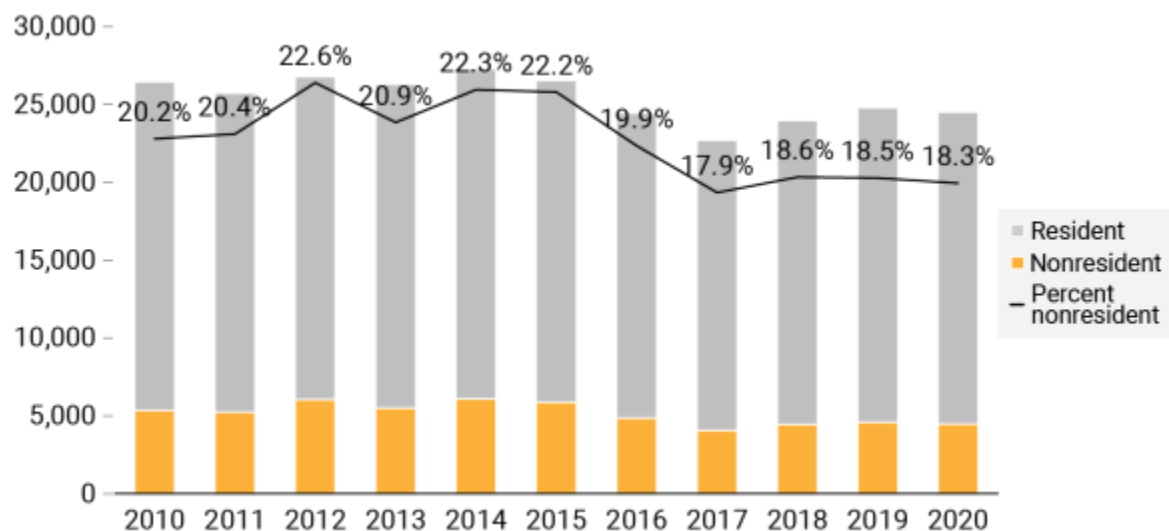
That's both an important theme and a challenging piece of information in the sense that restaurants, bars, hotels, gyms, and many of the other leisure and hospitality employers do most of their own short-term training.

In other words, those industries are less likely to need traditional workforce training. There may, however, be new opportunities for workforce development systems to use creative new ideas and tools to help, such as technology to better match employers with possible workers, or more effective ways to inform youth and other potential worker pools about the benefits and advancement opportunities in those industries.

Another industry worth mentioning is construction, which quickly rebounded from smaller-than-normal COVID-19-related losses and was expected to grow moderately even before the massive federal infrastructure spending bill was signed in November of 2021.

At the opposite end of the spectrum from leisure and hospitality, construction is a major benefactor of typical forms of workforce development training and funding, including everything from grants to training providers, individual grants and other funding to trainees, and registered apprenticeships.

Data from an annual report on nonresident workers in Alaska show that around 20 percent of Alaska construction workers are nonresidents (Figure 8). It's difficult to say how the 2021 federal infrastructure bill will impact Alaska's ability to find resident workers to benefit from the additional spending because nonresidents will also be in high demand in their home states for their infrastructure projects. But this presents clear opportunities to put more Alaskans into high-wage construction jobs in the next few years.



**Figure 8: Alaska Construction Worker Residency, 2010 - 2020**

Shifting to high-demand occupations, seen in Figure 9, the state's current long-term projections (out to 2028) are already somewhat dated because of the pandemic disruptions but still useful for identifying broad trends. New long-term occupational projections will be published in late summer.

Highest-growth occupations	Growth, 2018-28	Occupations to decline most	Loss, 2018-28
1 Farmworkers/Laborers, Crop, Nursery, Grnhouse	72.7%	1 Radio and Television Announcers	-22.2%
2 Separating, Filtering, Clarifying, Precipitating, and Still Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders	64.4%	2 Broadcast Technicians	-21.4%
3 Packaging/Filling Machine Operators and Tenders	42.3%	3 Reporters and Correspondents	-20.9%
4 Veterinary Technologists and Technicians	26.6%	4 Fallers	-13.3%
5 Veterinary Assistants, Lab Animal Caretakers	25.7%	5 Printing Press Operators	-12.9%
6 Helpers: Extraction Workers	24.8%	6 Gaming and Sports Book Writers and Runners	-12.9%
7 Veterinarians	23.5%	7 Legal Secretaries	-12.4%
8 Home Health Aides	23.0%	8 Editors	-12.4%
9 Millwrights	22.7%	9 Logging Equipment Operators	-11.3%
10 Surveyors	21.9%	10 Print Binding and Finishing Workers	-11.1%
11 Mining/Geological Engrs, incl Mining Safety	20.2%	11 Paralegals and Legal Assistants	-10.9%
12 Food Batchmakers	20.0%	12 Dancers	-9.7%
13 Demonstrators and Product Promoters	19.4%	13 Producers and Directors	-9.3%
14 Earth Drillers, Except Oil and Gas	18.4%	14 Title Examiners, Abstractors, and Searchers	-9.2%
15 Rotary Drill Operators, Oil and Gas	17.8%	15 Sewing Machine Operators	-7.4%
16 Chemical Technicians	15.4%	16 Insurance Underwriters	-6.6%
17 Architectural and Civil Drafters	15.2%	17 Lawyers	-6.3%
18 Personal Care Aides	14.9%	18 Legal Support Workers, All Other	-6.1%
19 Nonfarm Animal Caretakers	14.7%	19 Laundry and Dry-Cleaning Workers	-6.1%
20 Carpenters	14.1%	20 Media and Communication Workers, All Other	-5.8%
21 Software Developers, Applications	14.0%	21 Petroleum Pump System Operators, Refinery Operators, and Gaugers	-5.5%
22 Surveying and Mapping Technicians	13.8%	22 Insurance Claims and Policy Processing Clerks	-5.5%
22 Roustabouts, Oil and Gas	13.8%	23 Education Teachers, Postsecondary	-4.4%
24 Geological and Petroleum Technicians	13.6%	24 Engineering Teachers, Postsecondary	-4.4%
25 Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, Weighers	13.4%	25 Biological Science Teachers, Postsecondary	-4.4%

**Note:** Occupations with at least 50 workers

**Source:** Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

**Figure 9: High 25, Low 25 Occupations for Projected Growth 2018 - 2028**

With the caveat that analytical work is still in progress and conclusions about how the landscape has changed with the pandemic are pending, here are three themes visible in the high-growth occupations:

1. A significant share of the high-growth occupations is tied to resource extraction. That includes everything from extraction workers (#6) to surveyors, mining engineers, and geological and petroleum technicians (#10, #11, and #24).
2. A few occupations are specific to health care, and to senior care in particular. These include home health aides (#8) and personal care aides (#18). COVID-19 has increased the demand for those occupations in the short term and possibly the longer term as well.
3. Occupations tied to technology and specialized computer skills will be in high demand. In some cases, the occupations are in IT (software developers, #21), and in others the tools they use will continue to be transformed by new technology (architectural drafters, #17, and surveying technicians, #22).

There's also value in looking for themes in the occupations expected to be in less demand, such as:

1. Occupations in old-style media are in decline. Some core skills involved in that work will become more valuable — communication, problem-solving, ability to meet deadlines — but they'll be put to use in different occupations or different types of media employers than newspapers, broadcast TV and radio, etc.
2. Work that algorithms and self-help web tools can do (or soon will be able to do) will become obsolete. Similar to travel agents, which have largely disappeared, occupations that mostly perform repetitive tasks without subjective decision-making or

individualized problem solving (creating a basic will, conducting a title search, or filing an insurance claim) will be taken over by technology.

## **(ii) Emerging Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations**

The pandemic and the ensuing public health measures to mitigate the harm produced many changes over the last two years and had direct or indirect impacts on the economy and on nearly all employers and workers. Questions remain about how much things will return to the pre-pandemic normal and which changes will be permanent, in whole or part.

For those reasons, specific talk about emerging-demand industries and occupations in a time of flux is probably less helpful than a zoomed-out look at Alaska's broad economic assets and rough assessment of whether their importance is waxing or waning. Similarly, a detailed discussion of emerging occupations is less valuable than a general look at the skills and abilities that are growing in demand.

As noted above, the oil and gas industry in Alaska, which has easily been the most valuable in economic terms since statehood, has an uncertain future. Job numbers fell dramatically and have yet to show a clear bounce the way every other industry sector in the state has. Climate change concerns are part of the puzzle, as is the related difficulty of getting funding for new projects from large institutional banks and investors concerned about environmental factors and public perception.

The demand for oil will not disappear or fall dramatically for decades at least, according to world market experts, but it would be wishful thinking to see oil and gas in Alaska as a sure growth sector. Still, there are opportunities, assisted by technological advances, for oil suppliers to establish reputations as relatively safe and environmentally friendly places to produce oil. So, for the next few decades, oil and gas in Alaska is expected to fall somewhere between an industry in gradual decline and a stable economic asset as declining production is at least partially replaced by new oil fields amid the longer-term shift away from fossil fuels and toward alternative energy sources.

But aside from oil and gas, much of what Alaska offers to the national and international marketplace looks strong and relatively stable, or, in some cases, positioned for strong growth.

Alaska's fisheries are world-class in terms of volume, value, and management. There are constant challenges at the local or fishery levels, but the Alaska brand is strong, and the variety of seafood caught and produced here is significant enough to compensate for the state as a whole.

Closely connected to Alaska's seafood resource is a strong and expanding maritime sector. In addition to a massive and varied fishing fleet, the state has disproportionately large water transportation needs, significant water-based tourism (whale watching, sport fishing, glacier viewing, etc.), and some of the nation's largest Coast Guard bases. That activity produces ship-building and repair needs, among other related activity.

Mining has been an economic asset since long before statehood, and the shift to alternative energy sources (wind and solar in particular) will only increase the demand for the minerals and metals that Alaska currently produces or for which deposits have been identified in such a large and mineral-rich state.

The state's natural beauty, wildlife, and culture have long created a strong pull for tourists. Preliminary estimates for the 2022 cruise ship season would comfortably break records. There is likely pent-up demand for visitor-related spending, and some of what Alaska offers — clean air and cool temperatures — will be more in demand than ever. There's no question that increased visitor counts will create management challenges, but job opportunities will abound in tourism-related areas in the short and long terms.

In some senses, Alaska's distance from U.S. markets, as a supplier and a consumer, has been a consistent challenge and a driver of higher-than-average costs. But for world trade and as a stopover for air cargo, Alaska's location is an asset.

The Anchorage airport is second only to Memphis in billions of pounds of air cargo (24 for Memphis and 18 for Anchorage; Louisville is third at 15). In addition, Alaska will be near the center of emerging Arctic trade routes and supply lines if they continue to open as many expect.

The state's location is also strategic as a military asset, including large areas of mostly unpopulated territory for training purposes, though that waxes and wanes. With much of the geopolitical focus on China and Russia, the military will be stable or growing as an economic asset for the state. And although economic data for the military and its related activity are harder to come by, it's not difficult to quantify in general terms the outsized role the military plays in Alaska's economy.

### **(iii) Employers' Employment Needs**

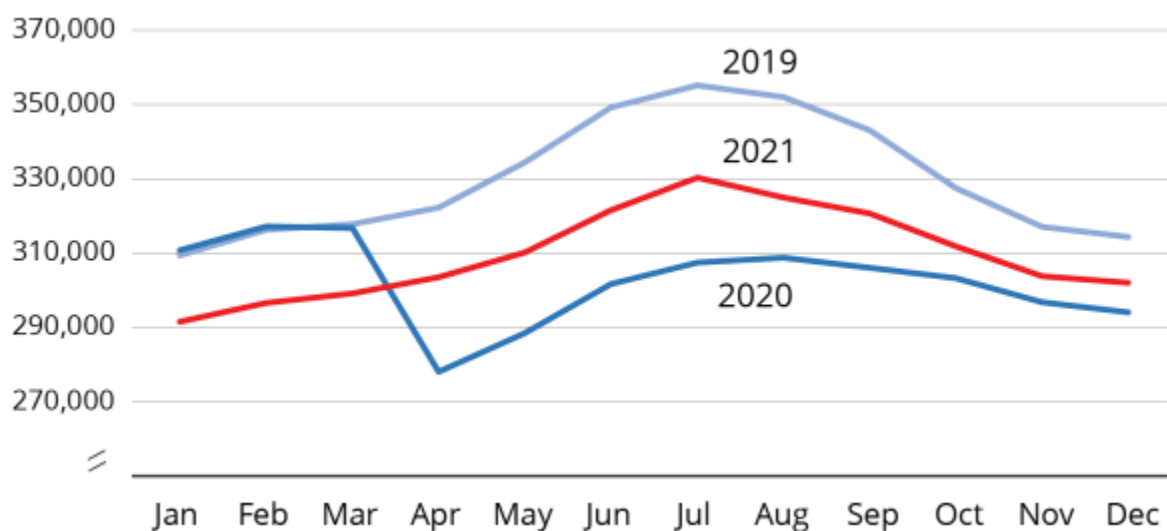
#### **Workers of all Types Needed**

In the short term — and as discussed above, probably the longer-term as well — employers' most obvious need is simple: job applicants. The highest needs are concentrated in lower-wage occupations that require little postsecondary training. Many of these occupations are the ones hit hardest by pandemic-related disruptions.

In large numbers, former workers in those occupations have been reluctant to return to the workforce. Research is in progress to identify the workers who have remained on the sidelines, including common characteristics such as age, gender, occupational history, and employers' industries, etc.

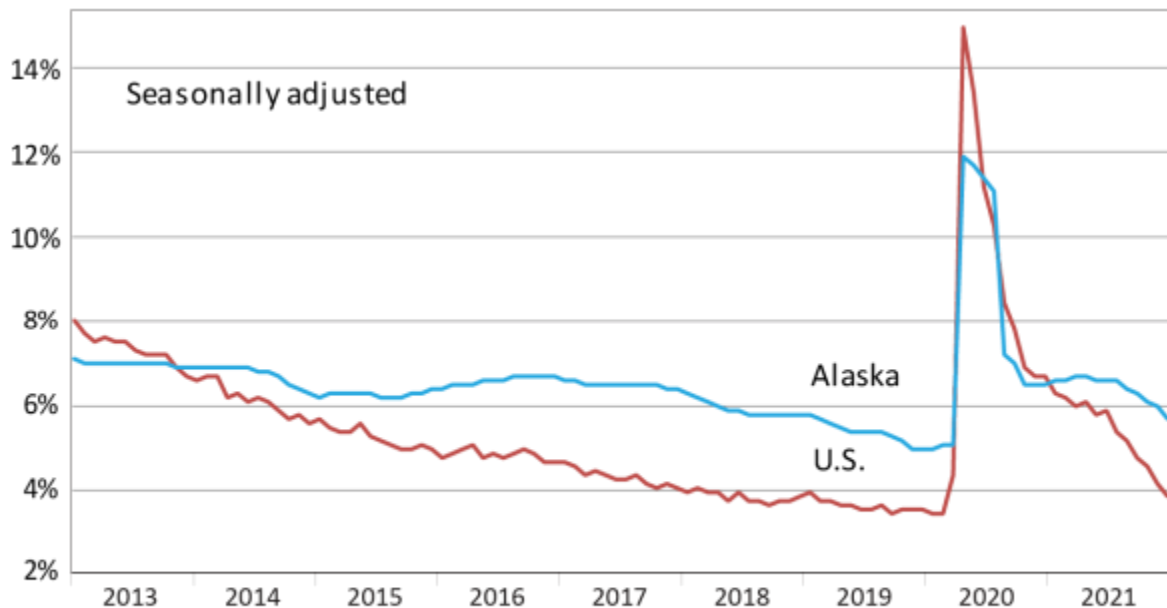
That will enable workforce agencies to help match potential workers to suitable employment openings through labor exchanges, application assistance, employer outreach, and as many new tools as can be imagined and implemented. Directing and prioritizing training-related funding to specific programs and training participants will be an unusually low priority. Rather, the state will need workers of all types and, similarly, training of all types will pay dividends because employers' recruitment and retention needs will be so acute.

As of December 2021, Alaska had recovered a substantial percentage of COVID19--related job losses, but its job count was still 12,400 below pre-COVID-19 levels (about 4 percent). As Figure 10 shows, the pandemic hit hard and fast over the February-April period of 2020, followed by incremental recovery in the subsequent months.



**Figure 10: Total Monthly Employment, 2019 - 2021**

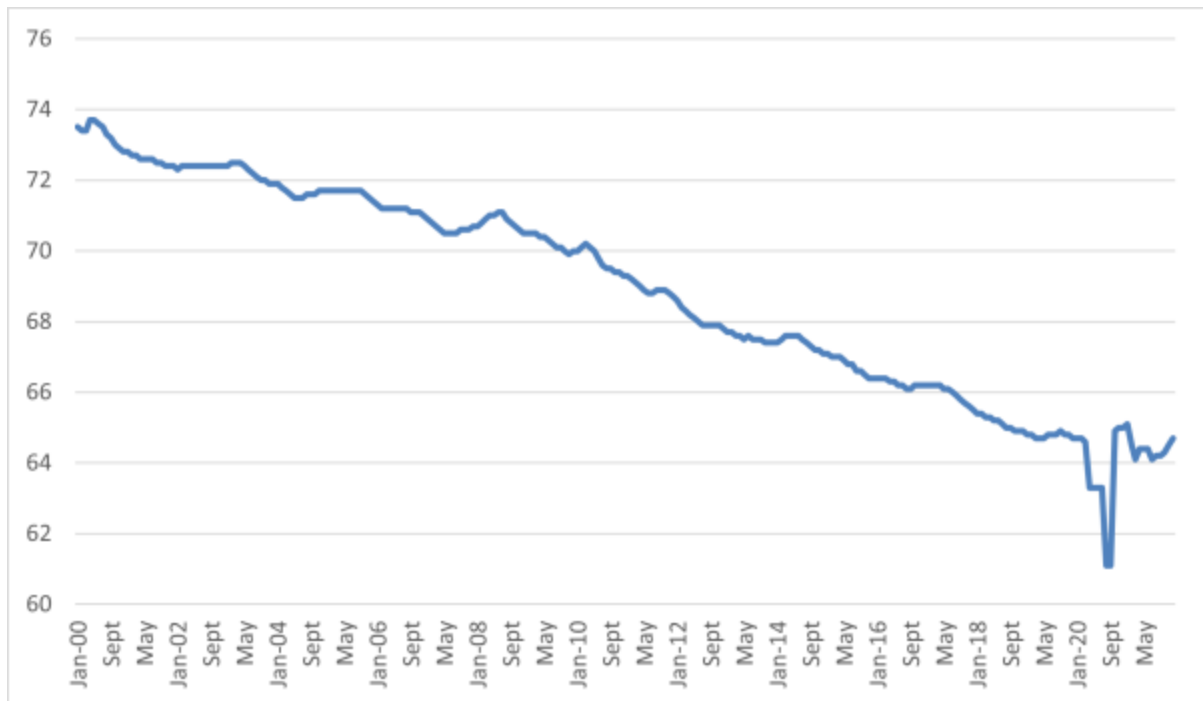
Unemployment rates (Figure 11), which have been less reliable during the past two years as an economic measure because of pandemic disruptions, show a roughly similar shock and gradual recovery.



Sources: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

**Figure 11: Unemployment Rates, Alaska and US, 2013 - 2021**

Predating the pandemic and the historically large disruptions caused by it, Alaska's labor force participation rate was already on a consistent decline. From as high as 74 percent in 2000, the labor force participation rate fell steadily to about 65 percent in the pre-pandemic months, then to as low as 61 percent during 2020. It has since bounced back to about 65 percent (Figure 12).



**Figure 12: Alaska Labor Force Participation Rate, 2000 - 2021**

### **(ii) Labor Market Trends**

As mentioned earlier, a critical labor market trend is the demographic trends that have significantly reduced the number of working-age people in Alaska and that will surely continue to do so in the next decade.

A second important trend, although less visible through the volatility and pandemic disruptions, is the large reduction in the oil and gas workforce and the weak subsequent recovery. Objective observers would have questioned the future of oil and gas as a pillar of the state's economy even before the pandemic hit. But the current oil and gas workforce is less than half of what it was just seven years ago, and the state lost 4,000 of these jobs during the pandemic and has gained just 1,000 back so far.

It's possible, as mentioned above, that the oil and gas recovery is just taking longer than other industries for reasons that will become clear over time. But it's also possible that the value of the industry's contribution to the economy will steadily shrink, and especially the revenue it generates in the next few decades.

### **(iii) Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce**

#### **Educational Attainment**

Ninety-three percent of Alaskans ages 25 and up have a high school diploma or higher, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, compared to 89 percent for the nation. That relationship switches for people with bachelor's degrees or higher, however, with 30 percent for Alaska and 33 percent for the U.S.

#### **Other Credentials**

Efforts to track licensing, certificates, apprenticeships, and other certifications are mostly still in the development phase at the state level, although various estimates have been produced. These types of efforts will grow in importance as the need for workers forces change into the educational level of education employers can ask for and still get sufficient applicant pools.



Keeping with the broad theme of this update to Alaska's WIOA State Plan, the critical point here is that, at every opportunity, Alaska should work to communicate to high school and middle school students that some type of postsecondary training or education will be important.

Rivalries between the "college track" and other types of training — apprenticeships, occupational training that results in licenses or certificates, etc. — are counterproductive. Rather, students should have access to clear labor market information about the outlook of different possible career paths, including the employment and wage outcomes for specific training programs, degrees, and apprenticeship programs. As hungry as employers will be for workers, opportunities will be unusually plentiful, and good occupational projections and training and education program performance reporting will help maximize those opportunities.

### **Alaska Natives**

Alaska Natives, a WIOA target population, are about 16 percent of the state's population or 20 percent if using the "alone or in combination" designation. (Increasingly, racial and ethnic demographic analysis uses the "alone or in combination" designation — which, as the name suggests, counts people in racial and ethnic groupings if they self-report as being part of more than one tracked race/ethnicity and one of those is the category being tracked — as the main measure of those populations' current status and also to identify trends). The state's Alaska Native population has grown slightly over the last decade by both measures.

Of the state's nearly 150,000 Alaska Natives, (alone or in combination), large numbers live in eight rural boroughs or census areas where they make up more than 50 percent of the population. Broadly, Alaska Natives have lower educational attainment (both for high school completion and postsecondary training and education) and significantly higher poverty rates.

### **Other Key Groups**

Employers' difficulty in filling open positions means that at no time in recent memory has there been a better opportunity for workforce development systems to help individuals with various barriers to employment to get jobs and receive all the correlated benefits of being included in the workforce.

Nationally, 44 percent of people with a disability who were not working reported some type of barrier to employment. The most common reported barrier is with the disability itself (79 percent), but other barriers reported were lack of education or training (12 percent), special features or accommodations at the job (11 percent), and lack of transportation (10 percent).

Specific to Alaska, about 33,000 people have a hearing difficulty disability, 18,000 a vision difficulty, 32,000 a cognitive difficulty, 38,000 ambulatory difficulty, 14,000 self-care difficulty, and 25,000 independent living difficulty.

Another large population with significant barriers to employment is the formerly incarcerated. A 2021 report from the Bureau of Justice Statistics found that of the 50,000 people released from federal prisons in 2010, 33 percent found no employment at all over the subsequent four years. Further, the former inmates who did find jobs tended to find employment with much less job security or upward mobility.

Alaska's Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Research and Analysis section has conducted one detailed study of the impact employment has on recidivism rates (<https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/trends/split/jun17art1.pdf>) and is currently in the process of conducting two additional studies of the impact of specific employment training programs provided during incarceration. This work is particularly important in Alaska where incarceration rates are higher than the national average (according to the Prison Policy Initiative, Alaska's incarceration rate of 718 per 100,000 was well above the national rate of 664 per 100,000).

Data are scarce on the population of formerly incarcerated individuals, but with a total prison population of about 15,000 people and a parolee population of another 10,000, the numbers are large. By a dramatic margin, the number incarcerated and out on parole are disproportionately male.

The homeless are another important population that face substantial barriers to employment. According to the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, Alaska had 1,900 homeless people in 2022. Of that number, 111 were veterans and 176 were young adults.

Other named populations with notable barriers to employment in Alaska include people currently or formerly in foster care, people whose first language is not English, and people with low literacy rates. Data for these populations are generally limited, but in all cases the numbers are believed to be significant. The key point in terms of the environment being uniquely favorable to assisting people with barriers to employment is that there have never been more job openings in Alaska than there are now, which means employers will be more open to considering hiring people that they may have discounted previously.

#### **(iv) Skill Gaps**

##### **Alaska's Unique Data Sets**

Alaska has two data sets not available in other states that help assess where employers are having difficulty finding workers. First, Alaska can identify residents and nonresidents working in the state thanks to its one-of-a-kind Permanent Fund Dividend program, which distributes a share of oil-related investment earnings to Alaskans each year. Alaskans who have lived in the state for the previous full calendar year are eligible, and nearly all who are eligible apply.

Second, Alaska is the only state that has required employers to report the occupations of their workers as part of mandatory unemployment insurance reporting. The detailed occupational data from employers and residency information allows Alaska to produce a report each year detailing the industries and occupations with the highest percentages of nonresident hire. The reliance on nonresident workers in priority industries and in-demand occupations can indicate a shortage of local workers with the necessary skills and aptitudes.

The current Nonresidents Working in Alaska report is available here:

<https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/reshire/nonres.pdf>

##### **Nonresident Employment**

The largest driver of nonresident employment in Alaska is seasonal work. In 2020, there were 383,860 total workers employed in Alaska at some point. Of these, 70,081 (18.3 percent) were “nonresident workers” based upon Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend eligibility, illustrating Alaska’s historical dependence upon out-of-state workers to fill jobs openings. The largest number of these workers filled seafood processing and tourism positions that are difficult to fill with residents during the busy summer. For example, in 2020, seafood processing employed 16,495 nonresidents and 4,618 residents.

Other industries with high percentages of nonresidents include oil and gas, construction, metal mining, and visitor-related industries. These industries have one or more of the following characteristics: high seasonal variation, a need for workers with specialized skills, or work sites in remote locations.

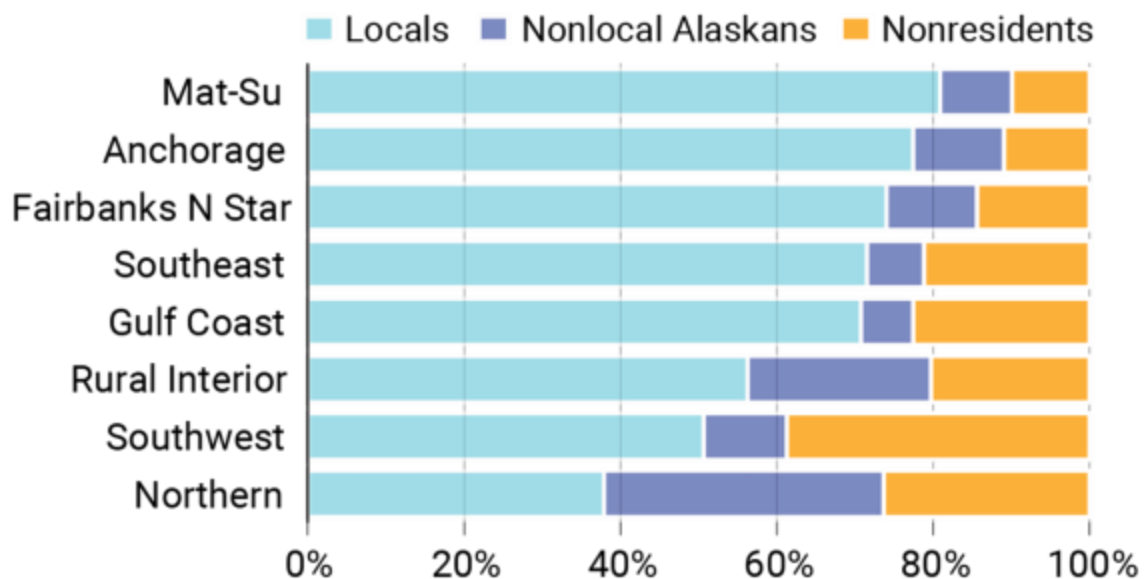
Looking at Alaska’s economic regions also sheds light on the impact of resident and nonresident workers in terms of jobs and earnings and where seasonal employment is a large factor. Alaska’s Northern Region provides thousands of high-paying jobs and good careers in Alaska’s vital industries such as oil, gas, and mining, where about one-third of the workforce is nonresident. The less populated Interior and Southwestern regions have fewer jobs; outside of

Fairbanks and rural hub communities, resident employment trends higher. The Denali Borough — located in the Interior region — has higher rates of nonresident employment because of the tourism jobs associated with Denali National Park tourism. The economies of the Southwest, Anchorage/Mat Su, and Southeast regions are based on maritime, seafood harvesting and processing, and tourism jobs, and rely more on migrating workforce to fill seasonal jobs.

### Identifying Regional Skills Gaps

The same annual report linked above identifies the extent to which regional employers hire from outside the local workforce. Whether a worker is imported from another state or another region in Alaska, that need signals an opportunity to benefit from generating more local employment.

Figure 13 highlights the dramatic difference between some regions' ability to fill jobs with locals and others' relative inability. In the Anchorage and Mat-Su areas, most jobs are held by people who live in those areas. In the Northern and Southwest regions, the majority of workers come from elsewhere in the state or from other states (or countries, in the case of seafood processing in Southwest).



**Figure 13: Worker Residency by Area**

## 2. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

### Core and Partner Programs

All core and partner programs, including One-Stop partners (Appendix 2.2), focus on the target populations under WIOA. These target populations include individuals with barriers to employment; displaced homemakers; low-income individuals; Alaska Natives, American Indians, and Native Hawaiians; youth and adults with disabilities; older individuals; ex-offenders; homeless individuals; youth who are in or who have aged out of the foster care system or are otherwise at risk; individuals who are English language learners or who have low levels of literacy; individuals facing substantial cultural barriers; farmworkers; individuals within two years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program; single parents (including single pregnant women); and long-term unemployed individuals. Alaska's refugee, asylum seeker, and immigrant youth and adult population may be included in several of these categories. Additionally, Alaska targets veterans

and transitioning military as key populations for services.

### **Alaska Natives**

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) includes Alaska Natives as a specific targeted population. The Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) works with Alaska Native organizations to ensure adequate and appropriate attention to cultural and geographic barriers to workforce development in the Alaska Native population, including culturally appropriate services to Alaska Native elders.

### **Alaska Workforce Investment Board**

Alaska's federal and state workforce programs are guided by the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) in collaboration with the administration and the state legislature. That guidance is based on input from the wide range of public and private entities engaged in educating and training the workforce, along with research from a variety of sources including DOLWD's Research and Analysis Section and the University of Alaska's Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER). The AWIB has adopted priority industry sector workforce plans for maritime, health care, mining, renewable energy and energy efficiency, oil and gas, construction, and transportation. All industry sector plans are built with sector partners and updated to focus on strategies to meet future demand for priority occupations. Priority occupation analysis informs the public workforce system statewide and regionally to concentrate on in-demand occupations. Labor market information, economic information, and direct involvement of industry employers and sector partnerships help identify career pathways and employment needs and opportunities.

DOLWD is the state's lead workforce agency charged with implementing the WIOA State Plan. The AWIB, located in the Office of the Commissioner, works closely with leadership to implement the plan and provides the oversight, guidance, assessment, and improvements to build and sustain workforce partnerships in each economic region. The AWIB ensures regional workforce planning is tied to each region's economic and labor market needs. The AWIB also manages the grants unit, which administers program funding from WIOA Youth, Apprenticeship, State Training and Employment Program (STEP), and Alaska's Technical Vocational Education Program (TVEP), and receives and disburses most of Alaska's public workforce development resources.

### **Title I - Adult and Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs**

The Adult and Dislocated programs provide career services, supportive services, and training for adults to become self-sufficient. These services are provided by Career Support and Training Services (CSTS) case managers located in Alaska Job Centers (AJCs). The CSTS case managers work with participants, employment service partners, and training providers to develop Individualized Employment Plans (IEP) and create Individual Training Accounts (ITA) to pay tuition-based job training activities. Individuals in need of additional financial assistance while participating in program services are provided with support services. Participants may be concurrently enrolled in other federal or state programs such as the State Training and Employment Program (STEP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or vocational rehabilitation, for example.

The Youth program is administered through a competitive award process, and services are delivered by eleven subrecipients located throughout the state. Subrecipients ensure the WIOA Youth program's 14 basic elements are made available to participants, conduct comprehensive assessments, identify career pathways, coordinate work experience opportunities, and complete Individual Service Strategies (ISS) outlining the services, goals, and support service needs.

Types of services:

Career Services - include labor market information, job listings, partner program listings, and individualized services such as comprehensive and specialized assessments; development of

IEPs, ISSs, and ITAs; counseling; career planning; and workforce preparation activities. These services are provided to assist individuals in obtaining or retaining employment.

Training services - include occupational skills training, including training for nontraditional employment; on-the-job training; incumbent worker training; programs that combine workplace training with related instruction, which may include cooperative education programs; training programs operated by the private sector; skill upgrading and retraining; entrepreneurial training; transitional jobs; job readiness training; adult education and literacy activities including activities of English language acquisition and integrated education and training programs; and customized training conducted with a commitment by an employer or group of employers to employ an individual upon successful completion of the training.

Support services - may be utilized by Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth participants engaged in individualized career and training services. Supportive services may include, and are not limited to, transportation, childcare, dependent care, medical and dental care, housing, food, and utilities payments that are necessary to enable an individual to participate in services. Youth program participants may also utilize support services during the follow-up period.

Follow-up Services – for exited adults and dislocated workers are non-monetary activities provided for up to 12 months, which help participants retain unsubsidized employment resulting from the program-related services they received. For exited WIOA Youth, follow-up services include activities that help ensure successful employment or post-secondary education/training and may include monetary supportive services.

These Title IB programs provide individuals the career guidance, employment skills, and vocational technical training intended to rapidly lead to employment or re-employment; or for youth, entry into post-secondary education or training. This includes work-based learning programs where skills are learned through work experiences, career and technical education, OJT, internships, pre-apprenticeship, and apprenticeship methods of training.

## **Title II - Alaska Adult Education**

The Alaska Adult Education Program (AAE) is a statewide instructional program that provides formal education for adults over the age of sixteen to enhance their postsecondary education skills in order to transition into employment. The goal of AAE is to identify a student's educational level and facilitate a successful transition to postsecondary education, training, or employment. AAE programs instruct students in basic skills, high school equivalency diploma attainment, English language acquisition, and workforce preparation courses. AAE includes regional education programming, an integrated correctional system, and a grant for Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education.

## **Title III - Wagner-Peyser/One-Stop**

The One-Stop delivery system collaborates with partners to create a seamless system of service delivery that enhances access to services and improves long-term employment outcomes for individuals receiving assistance. The employment and training services provided through the Alaska Job Centers (AJCs) are the foundation of the One-Stop delivery system in Alaska, providing universal access to labor exchange, career, and training services, in-person and online through the AlaskaJobs (<https://alaskajobs.alaska.gov/vosnet/Default.aspx>) online labor exchange and case management system. The goal of universal access is that workers, job seekers, and employers may all obtain services under one roof from easy-to-find locations. The delivery points for the employment and training services are within the 14 AJC locations of the Alaska Job Center Network (AJCN) located throughout the state, and AlaskaJobs online system. As part of the One-Stop service delivery system, AJCs provide the full spectrum of employment-related labor exchange services including job search assistance, job referral, job placement assistance for job seekers, re-employment services to unemployment insurance claimants, and recruitment services for employers with job openings. Services are delivered in one of three modes, including self-service, facilitated self-help services, and staff-assisted services.

Depending on individual needs, additional services may be available, such as assessment of skill levels and abilities, aptitude testing, career guidance, job seeking workshops, and referral for training and supportive services.

Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER) staff are essential in the AJCs with the highest veteran populations and fully integrated into the One-Stop delivery system. DVOP and LVER staff also work with employers to recruit, hire, promote, and retain veterans in meaningful employment. Outreach is provided in places such as U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs medical and veteran centers, homeless shelters, civic and service organizations, Veteran Stand Down events, Veterans' job fairs, and military installations.

The DVOP specialists' primary responsibility is to provide individualized career services to eligible veterans and "other eligible persons" with significant barriers to employment (SBE), such as transitioning military members, caregivers, wounded warriors, and spouses. Once a veteran or other eligible person is determined to be "job ready" by AJC staff, their resume is provided to a LVER, a business services representative from the Business Connection team, or other appropriate AJC staff to receive employment placement services.

Apprenticeship specialists in the AJCs provide information and assistance to employers to create Registered Apprenticeship programs tailored to their workforce needs. Registered Apprenticeships allow employers to establish the standards of proficiency while developing a local and loyal workforce, often solving key industry occupational shortages. Any business that requires skilled employees can benefit from this program.

DOLWD's efforts in providing prisoner re-entry services have proven successful for prisoners transitioning back into communities by partnering with the Department of Corrections to coordinate and develop job placement assistance and services.

Services offered to employers, in addition to referral of job seekers to available job openings, include:

- Help in developing job order requirements;
- Matching job seeker experience with job requirements, skills, and other attributes;
- Assisting employers with special recruitment needs;
- Coordinating job fairs;
- Analyzing hard-to-fill job orders for employers;
- Providing information and resources for industry forecasts, wage and hour laws, occupational safety, and more;
- Helping employers minimize or avoid layoffs and business closures;
- Establishing USDOL Registered Apprenticeship programs;
- Providing information and resources for workforce training;
- Hire incentives like tax credits and Fidelity Bonding that encourage employers to hire at-risk workers;
- WorkKeys assessments (at no cost to job seekers or employers) to determine a worker's foundational workplace skill levels for success in the workplace.

#### **Title IV - Vocational Rehabilitation**

Vocational rehabilitation services are provided through the Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). DVR provides vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities who, because of their disability/ies, have difficulty obtaining or maintaining employment. Disabilities that result in an impediment to employment could include psychiatric, physical, or orthopedic disabilities, as well as cognitive impairments, auditory disabilities, and visual impairments.

DVR provides the services necessary to achieve competitive, integrated employment, such as guidance and counseling, assessment, vocational and other training, transportation, diagnosis and treatment, on-the-job training, job-related services, customized employment, and supported employment. DVR also provides students who experience disabilities with Pre-

Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). Through informed choice and comprehensive assessment, a consumer and their Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) to develop a vocational goal and determine necessary services to achieve employment. Services identified in the IPE are based on the individual's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice. DVR delivers services throughout the state through five regional offices located in high population urban areas (two in Anchorage and one each in Fairbanks, Mat-Su Valley, and Juneau) and four satellite offices in smaller more rural areas (Eagle River, Kenai, Sitka, and Ketchikan). Additionally, DVR has identified six regional rural hubs to which assigned DVR counselors travel two to three times per year (Bethel, Nome, Kotzebue, Utqiagvik, Dillingham, and Kodiak). DVR partners with the local Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation programs, as well as local AJCs and schools located in these rural hubs.

#### **Alaska Native Organizations and Alaska Native WIOA Grantees**

There are twelve Alaska Native Regional non-profit organizations recognized under WIOA as partners in the workforce system. Alaska Native Regional Employment and Training entities receive funding under WIOA to provide services, in tandem with state WIOA resources, to specifically serve Alaska's Native and American Indian people. These regional Alaska Native non-profits, formed under the federal Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971, are a vital component of Alaska's state and regional workforce development system. Alaska Native organizations help ensure adequate representation in workforce development planning and in delivery of culturally and regionally responsive services to Alaska Natives and American Indians, particularly for Youth and Elders. They have unique relationships with Alaska's largest economic drivers, Alaska Native Corporations, and businesses offering good paying jobs and careers in Alaska and across the nation. The regional non-profits operate American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services programs funded by the federal Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration. They fill a gap when state DVR service providers are unable to directly serve eligible clients in rural communities and villages.

#### **Trade Adjustment Assistance**

The Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program assists workers who lose their jobs due to foreign trade-related competition or outsourcing. The program provides opportunities to the impacted individuals to obtain the skills, credentials, resources, and support needed to return to suitable employment as quickly as possible. Historically, Alaska's TAA certified dislocations have been in the petroleum, timber, and fishing industries. Services provided to TAA participants include reemployment and case management services, career development, classroom training, on-the-job training, customized training, income support, job search allowance, relocation allowance, Trade Readjustment Allowances - weekly income support much like unemployment insurance, and a Health Coverage Tax Credit. The AlaskaJobs online labor exchange and case management system provides a single sign-on for WIOA Title I, II, and III and TAA, and this allowed the TAA program to transition to complete electronic case management and conduct more seamless co-enrollment of participants with the WIOA Dislocated Worker program. The TAA program maintained service levels through outreach to customers using email, phone, virtual meetings, and AlaskaJobs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **Senior Community Service Employment Program**

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is administered by DOLWD and serves unemployed, low-income persons who are at least 55 years of age, are not work ready, and have a family income of no more than 125 percent of the federal poverty level. Enrollment priority is given to veterans and qualified spouses, then to individuals who are over 65, have a disability, low literacy skills or limited English proficiency, and who reside in a rural area, are homeless or at risk of homelessness, have low employment prospects, have failed to find

employment after using services through the AJCs, have been incarcerated within the last 5 years, or are under supervision following release from prison or jail within the last 5 years. The program assists them in developing skills and experience to facilitate their transition to unsubsidized employment. SCSEP is known in Alaska as Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training (MASST) and is a component of the Division of Employment and Training Services. Its long-term strategy is to ensure that Alaska's job opportunities are available to older workers and that the program continues to engage workforce development partners, the business community, and senior service partners to provide successful outcomes for seniors and Alaskan businesses alike. SCSEP fosters individual economic self-sufficiency and promotes useful part-time opportunities in community service assignments.

SCSEP is a required One-Stop partner under WIOA and, as such, is part of the Alaska Job Center Network. When acting in their WIOA partner capacity, SCSEP staff and subrecipients are required to follow all applicable WIOA rules and regulations. The WIOA operational requirements do not apply to SCSEP operations, but as required partners under WIOA, grantees are obligated to be familiar with WIOA requirements. These regulations enable grantees and subrecipients to concentrate on the core missions of the SCSEP by providing community service assignments to hard-to-serve older individuals. AJCs will provide services both to older individuals who are not eligible for the SCSEP and to those who are eligible but need the career services that the SCSEP is unable to provide.

SCSEP staff work directly with mandated partners to co-enroll participants in state training and employment programs and other needed social service programs. This ensures that SCSEP is an integrated, effective, job-driven workforce program. DOLWD continues to solidify its commitments to public/private partnerships to refine strategies and increase the responsiveness of SCSEP by providing oversight and technical assistance activities to improve program performance.

SCSEP service delivery is integrated into both the state's workforce investment system and the senior service system. Skilled AJC and project operator staff provide quality services to older workers, and employers have reported high satisfaction levels with SCSEP participants who have entered unsubsidized employment with them. Alaska's strategy is to continue to reach out to workforce development partners, the business community, and the senior service partners to ensure successful outcomes for older workers and Alaskan businesses.

### **State Funded Workforce Programs**

#### **Alaska State Training and Employment Program (STEP)**

STEP is a job-training program funded by a diversion of 0.01 percent of employee payroll tax contributions for Unemployment Insurance, providing approximately \$8 million annually to enhance the quality of in-state training and employment services for Alaska residents. More than 3,000 residents are served by STEP each year. Services include job training and employment services to help individuals obtain work or new skills to remain employed, learn new technologies, and meet emerging job demand opportunities. In addition, individuals served by STEP may receive support services such as transportation, temporary housing, meals, tools, and other supplies while in training.

#### **Alaska Technical Vocational Education Program (TVEP)**

TVEP is funded similarly to STEP through a diversion of the employee payroll tax contribution for Unemployment Insurance at a rate of 0.16 percent, which amounts to over \$10 million annually (FY 19 was \$10.95 million, FY 20 was \$12.49 million). TVEP helps secondary and postsecondary institutions and training centers create and maintain education and training services that match the regional economic and workforce needs. TVEP is distributed through a legislative formula to the University of Alaska, the Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC), and several regional training centers in all regions of the state.



### **Alaska Construction Academy**

The Alaska Construction Academy (ACA) was created by a partnership including representatives from the state, industry, tribal organizations, and school districts to address the demand for construction workers. The goals of ACA are to: develop a strong, flexible workforce able to continue with employment, registered apprenticeship, or postsecondary technical and education training in the construction industry; enable employers to employ trained Alaskans, which increases productivity and safety of the workforce; and place Alaskans in construction and construction-related occupations or additional training. Serving the Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Kenai Peninsula, Ketchikan, Mat-Su, Nome (new), Bristol Bay, and Kotzebue (new) areas, ACA helps the industry by developing a cadre of Alaskans with the basic skills needed to enter a registered apprenticeship, postsecondary training, or entry-level construction employment.

### **USDOL Registered Apprenticeship Programs**

Since 1947, when the Carpenters JATC created the first trade apprenticeship program in Alaska, Alaskan employers have been training their employees through the registered apprenticeship process. Registered apprenticeship programs in Alaska have enjoyed steady growth since that time. In 2015, Alaska began an expansion of registered apprenticeship programs across the state, which has helped employers see how apprenticeship can benefit their businesses. This has led to increased opportunities in apprenticeship for health care, aviation, and construction. As of November 2021, Alaska had about 1,968 registered apprentices training in over 70 occupations, with 286 program sponsors and more than 700 employers that hire and train apprentices on the job.

DOLWD has hired an Apprenticeship Unit Supervisor to work with employers and the U.S. Office of Apprenticeship to expand the number of Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs in the state. This expansion will target construction, health care, and aviation as focus industries for RA; however, DOLWD will continue to target all occupations that are apprenticeable.

DOLWD was awarded two USDOL apprenticeship grants that focus on health care. First was the American Apprenticeship Initiative grant of \$2.9 million, a five-year project that ended in September 2021 and added over 683 Registered Apprentices to the workforce. The project increased career awareness, strengthened existing and introduced new career pathways, and significantly helped employers fill entry-level positions in high-demand health care sector occupations. DOLWD also received a USDOL State Apprenticeship Expansion (SAE) grant that ended in April 2021. This approximately \$1.5 million award over three years supported implementation of health care apprenticeships in five occupations – electronic health records technician, community health worker, clinical medical assistant, medical administrative assistant, and medical biller/coder – under the sponsorship of the Alaska Primary Care Association (APCA).

Under another part of the State Apprenticeship Expansion grant, DOLWD implemented registered apprenticeships in aviation, which is a relatively new industry to the apprenticeship model. With the help of the USDOL Office of Apprenticeship in Alaska, two aviation occupations were approved: Airframe & Powerplant Mechanic and Air Transport Pilot. Since the SAE grant ended, Alaska's Apprenticeship Coordinator continues to assist sponsors with registration and case management.

The South Central Area Health Education Center (SCAHEC) and the Alaska Construction Academies provide quality pre-apprenticeship programs. The Construction Academies have been in existence for a decade and have become a model for high-quality pre-apprenticeship training at a variety of locations across the state. SCAHEC provides a three week-long health care pre-apprenticeship academy (PATH) across the state. These have been well-received by employers, as participants graduate with appropriate certifications, background screening, and drug testing, and are ready to go to work. SCAHEC and DOLWD continue to work to connect

PATH Academy graduates with employers interested in sponsorship for RA.

Information on apprenticeships is included in the regular ongoing training for all AJC staff and training for new staff. AJCs each have an Apprenticeship Specialist who s in-depth services to job seekers and employers. Apprenticeship Specialists from across the state received in-depth Apprenticeship Foundational Training in August 2019. Public and private sector health care providers are engaged and anxious to expand training through apprenticeship to fill many critical positions. Apprentices have been registered in seventeen health care occupations including medical assistant, veterinary technician, and medical coder-biller. Working with the Alaska Health Workforce Coalition, DOLWD has targeted several new occupations for RA, such as Direct Support Specialist and Peer Support Specialist, which are critical entry-level and high turnover positions. SCAHEC and DOLWD will target these occupations as a focus of the PATH Academies, which will incentivize employers to become sponsors of RA.

A Project Assistant was hired to expand construction apprenticeship and works in conjunction with local Apprenticeship Specialists across the state to promote RA. The focus is on construction occupations rather than construction businesses. For example, a grocery store may sponsor a Building Maintenance apprenticeship. However, DOLWD will continue to market to independent construction businesses that could benefit from RA.

Alaska is expanding the participation of colleges joining the Registered Apprenticeship College Consortium so that apprentices earn college credit toward degrees and may transfer the credits to other members of the Consortium. The Apprenticeship Coordinator has partnered with programs that are approved by the American Council on Education to provide distance-delivered Registered Apprenticeship Related Technical Instruction. Alaska colleges are awarding credit to apprentices who successfully complete these programs, which gives apprentices a leg up toward a degree or certificate. The University of Alaska offers an Associate of Applied Science in Apprenticeship Technologies Degree, for which a Registered Apprenticeship completer may earn credit towards degree completion. Due to the efforts of SCAHEC, apprentices who complete their program can gain college credit from Alaska Pacific University. The University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) has hired an Apprenticeship Coordinator and operates apprenticeship programs in Diesel Technology and Automotive Technology, which will also lead to degree attainment.

While women represent 48 percent of the population of Alaska, only 20 percent of apprentices are women. This is a ten-percent increase since 2014 and can be attributed to the growth in health care apprenticeships. Of the 1,968 apprentices, 70.5 percent are Caucasian, 14.6 percent are Alaska Native or American Indian, 3.9 percent are African American, 1.6 percent are Hispanic (who can be of any race), 2.7 percent are Asian, and the remaining apprentices are Native Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander, or did not identify an ethnicity or race. These numbers are roughly comparable to their proportion in the total Alaska population. The average age of Alaska apprentices is 28, with 41 percent between 16 and 24 and 43 percent between 25 and 35.

Expanding the utilization of Registered Apprenticeship will have a significant impact on increased earnings by Alaskans who become apprentices. Based on the latest data available from the Research and Analysis section of DOLWD, those who complete an apprenticeship earn three times more on average than they did the year before they entered apprenticeship. Those participating in an RA program had an average wage of \$57,040, 35% higher than all other workers. Increasing the number of apprentices and the completion rate will have a significant impact on the local and statewide economy as well as in the lives of individuals and their families.

## **(B) The Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities**

### **Strengths**

### **Workforce Plans**

Existing sector partners are already actively involved in workforce development for their sectors, as identified in the various industry sector workforce development plans discussed in previous sections. In addition, a robust Career and Technical Education (CTE) Plan, which provides a framework for technical training at both the secondary and postsecondary levels, was developed in 2010 with implementation led by the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB), Departments of Education & Early Development and Labor and Workforce Development, and the University of Alaska. Used by school districts, university programs, and other postsecondary training programs, it advances a seamless system of CTE for Alaska. In 2017, the Alaska Workforce Investment Board convened a workgroup to update the CTE Plan and provide implementation guidelines for various audiences such as educators, parents, industry, and policymakers.

### **Alaska Native Groups**

Alaska Native Corporations and other Alaska Native groups are extremely important to Alaska's economy and the health and prosperity of every region. Alaska Native non-profit organizations assure adequate and appropriate attention to cultural and geographic barriers that inhibit workforce development. The twelve regional Alaska Native Non-Profit Corporations organized under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act recognized under Section 4(b) of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (PL 93-638, 25 U.S.C. 450b) provide a wide range of social, education, and employment services. Each has unique abilities and resources to serve Alaska Natives and American Indians and drive new initiatives to overcome education and employment barriers for greater success among these populations. They provide a vital connection among education, training, and employment and are most able to respond to the needs and strengths of Alaska's Native and American Indian people.

### **Other Groups**

A diversity of groups actively promote workforce and economic development, including: Business Education Compact; Alaska Native Coalition for Employment and Training (ANCET); the Alaska Apprenticeship Training Coordinators Association; Alaska Association for Career and Technical Education; the AWIB; state agencies including: the Department of Education & Early Development and Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development; the University of Alaska system; regional training centers; the Alaska Postsecondary Access and Completion Network; the Alaska Safety Alliance; Alaska Native education and training providers; Alaska Works Partnership; and the Fairbanks Pipeline Training Center Trust, among others.

### **Partnerships**

Strong partnerships and collaborations among state agencies ensure that programs or services are complementary rather than duplicated.

Alaska's Regional Development Organizations (ARDORs) contribute greater understanding of regional economic realities and bring a comprehensive economic and workforce focus for regional communities, industries, and employers. Collaboration with ARDORs incorporates broad-ranging economic goals into specific workforce development actions that strengthen each region. ARDORs provide a vital tool for resource-leveraging, innovation, and the ability to sustain a regional workforce system.

The previous merger of two DOLWD divisions (Business Partnerships and Employment Security) into the Division of Employment and Training Services has resulted in streamlined and efficient services and training for job seekers and employers.

Strong partnership with the USDOL Office of Apprenticeship in Alaska establishes and supports Registered Apprenticeship programs.

### **Weaknesses/Challenges of Workforce Development Activities**

#### **Geography**

Alaska's geographic size and diverse population make access to education, training, and apprenticeships a unique challenge. The state's largest cities are connected by road, but a large portion of the state is accessible only by air or water, and travel may be expensive and time-consuming. There is often the additional challenge of cultural differences for people coming from villages to urban areas. Those challenges create a unique need for distance delivery of employment and training services and, in many cases, for funds to cover travel and housing when training can only be completed in-person. To overcome geographic barriers and higher unemployment rates, DOLWD is developing mobile information and connections to career training to better serve persons living in rural communities, providing job seekers and employers increased access to services anytime from anywhere.

While urban areas have good access to job training, registered apprenticeships, colleges, and technical schools, most remote rural communities do not. The career and technical education pathways are competitive, adding more difficulty for rural residents to participate because courses fill quickly with those living locally. The cost of connecting students and job seekers to the resources and education needed to succeed are high for those in rural areas. Paying for travel and housing while in training can be a significant barrier that job seekers in an urban area do not face. AJC services alone cannot overcome all of these barriers. Successfully developing an engaged and qualified Alaskan-based workforce in rural communities takes more reliance on collaboration and leveraging of resources due to the challenges that exist both economically and socially in rural Alaska.

### **Technology Access and Skills**

Another skills gap, not illustrated in graphs and charts, is computer and other technological skills. The difference in internet speed and technology capacity between urban and rural or remote communities is significant; the cities are up to date and the rural/remote communities lag. Many people living in remote communities - students, teachers, employers, and job seekers - simply do not have the electronic capacity to learn skills, apply for jobs, or receive on-line services on par with those living in the city because of the lack of technology infrastructure.

### **Employability Skills**

Many employers report a lack of motivated job seekers with basic employability skills to fill community jobs. There are many causes: personal issues such as substance abuse, and system issues such as the lack of local career pathway programs, as well as few available qualified instructors and mentors. Lack of motivation is affected by seasonality of work and rates of pay for entry-level jobs.

### **Immigrant Population**

Alaska has a sizable immigrant community, with nearly 8 percent of Alaskans born in another country. In 2015, over 58,000 persons residing in Alaska were immigrants, refugees, or asylum seekers. Many are highly educated and have knowledge and skills employers need, with immigrant workers most numerous in the health care, retail trade, accommodation and food services, public administration, and manufacturing industries. Foreign education and credentials may not be as valued or recognized in the United States, which results in high rates of unemployment, underemployment, and poverty among this population. Anchorage is one of the nation's most ethnically diverse communities. Limited English proficiency is a significant barrier to learning and employment. The inability to recognize foreign education degrees and occupational credentials is another significant barrier.

### **State Fiscal Considerations**

Alaska's economy grew modestly in 2019 as it emerged from its deepest statewide recession since the 1980s. After losing nearly 6,000 jobs over the 2015-2018 period, oil and gas employment is growing again and was up 600 jobs over year-ago levels in the most recent data. Construction is another industry that has had a modest bounce in employment, due to strong military construction spending and increased oil and gas activity. With a few small exceptions, job growth is widespread across industries and geographic areas.

Faced with declining oil revenue and largely depleted rainy day savings accounts, Alaska made significant cuts to its budgets over the last several years. There is substantial work still ahead, however, as the state wrestles with difficult political decisions about what to do with its Permanent Fund Dividend, taxes, and the cost of existing state services. Until those issues are resolved and a new level of normalcy is established, uncertainty and instability will dampen the state's economic growth.

Alaska took a big step towards a more diverse revenue stream and more budget stability when it passed a law allowing investment earnings from the state's \$65 billion Permanent Fund to be used for government services. That single change will reduce the state's dependence on oil-related revenue from 80 percent to about 30 percent, a dramatic shift. But until the state determines how to rebalance its revenue and spending to deal with still-large budget deficits, there will be strong downward pressure on state government spending. The University of Alaska has been a particularly large target of cuts and is expected to face additional cuts in the next few years.

State budget reductions have meant fewer staff to deliver workforce development programs and services. Reduced funding has resulted in closing job centers located in rural hub communities such as Kotzebue and Utqiagvik. Consolidation of space in urban centers will require shifting to a model that provides fewer in-person services and more information and services online and in conjunction with regional workforce partners such as the University of Alaska community campuses, regional training centers, and Alaska Native WIOA grantees. The temporary closures of Job Centers and subsequent remote service delivery necessitated by the pandemic have provided a glimpse into the new model and how it might work.

### **(C) State Workforce Development Capacity**

#### **Secondary Education and Training**

Alaska has 54 school districts, including a statewide boarding school, many of which have at least one career and technical education (CTE) program geared toward one or more of Alaska's priority industries. Many districts have articulation agreements with a UA or other postsecondary program so students can earn concurrent secondary and postsecondary credits. High school CTE programs are aligned to industry, academic, and employability skills, and to school-to-apprenticeship standards. The recent economic downturn and state budget cuts have hindered CTE across the K-12 spectrum, and Alaska's share of federal Carl D. Perkins CTE funding has remained stagnant for more than two decades. Districts are trying to keep CTE programs viable by forming consortiums with other districts or programs, offering alternative delivery models such as intensive academies, using equipment simulators for training, or partnering with local employers, non-profit organizations, or other agencies to share facilities or instructors.

#### **Postsecondary Education and Training**

##### **AVTEC**

The Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC) in Seward is the only state-owned and operated postsecondary technical training center. AVTEC offers student housing and serves a statewide focused mission to expand employment opportunities for Alaskans by preparing students with career and technical skills required for success in the Alaska workforce. Training programs include culinary arts, heavy diesel mechanic, welding, construction, plumbing and heating, refrigeration, industrial electricity, office administrative support for medical and accounting, and networking. The Alaska Maritime Training Center located at AVTEC is the largest maritime training center in Alaska, offering over forty US Coast Guard-approved courses for licensed and unlicensed marine vessel deck and engine operations plus shoreside vessel maintenance and repair training for small to medium shipyard employees. Students complete their training in less than a year with occupational credentials and certifications and are employed in Alaska's industries with the necessary entry-level technical and employability skills to provide continued career advancement and success.

## **University of Alaska**

The University of Alaska (UA) is an open enrollment institution with education and training programs including pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs and hands-on competency-based training, as well as traditional learning labs and classroom settings, leading students to industry recognized certifications, endorsements, and degrees. At UA, students may be eligible for credit for prior learning through military or prior work experience, and dual enrollment opportunities are available for high school students.

UA has three independently accredited universities, located in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau, and 13 community campuses across the state offering many distance learning courses for greater access to programs. The community campuses support regional economic growth by training people for local jobs. UA enrolls approximately 27,000 full and part-time students annually through about 400 unique degree, certificate, and occupational endorsement programs.

UA's workforce development focus is aligned with the Alaska Workforce Investment Board's priorities and regional priorities including the health, mining, construction, oil and gas, education, and maritime industry occupations. UA rural campuses serve as regional training centers and support regional economic drivers through engagement with local industries and employers to provide timely education and training programs.

UA participates in apprenticeship programs through membership in the Registered Apprenticeship College Consortium, developing new federally Registered Apprenticeship programs, providing opportunities for apprenticeship completers with credit for prior learning, and sponsoring apprenticeships programs. The UA system also works closely with school districts to provide dual credit opportunities for career and technical education students so they may quickly attain postsecondary certificates and degrees after completing high school. UA also partners with K-12 education through middle colleges and the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program.

The University is home to the Alaska Small Business Development Center, which has offices in Anchorage, Wasilla, Fairbanks, Soldotna, and Juneau, and provides no-cost advising services and low-cost educational programs to entrepreneurs looking to start or grow their small business. The Center's business advisors work with entrepreneurs in confidential, one-on-one sessions in management, marketing, sales, finance, accounting, and other disciplines required for small business growth, expansion, and innovation.

- University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA)
  - o Community & Technical College - Anchorage
  - o Matanuska-Susitna College - Palmer
  - o Prince William Sound College - Valdez
  - o Kodiak College - Kodiak
  - o Kenai Peninsula College - Soldotna
- University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF)
  - o Community & Technical College - Fairbanks
  - o Chukchi Campus - Kotzebue
  - o Interior Alaska Campus - based in Fairbanks, serves rural areas in Interior Alaska
  - o Northwest Campus - Nome
  - o Kuskokwim Campus - Bethel
  - o Bristol Bay Campus - Dillingham
- University of Alaska Southeast (UAS)

- o Juneau Campus
- o Sitka Campus
- o Ketchikan Campus

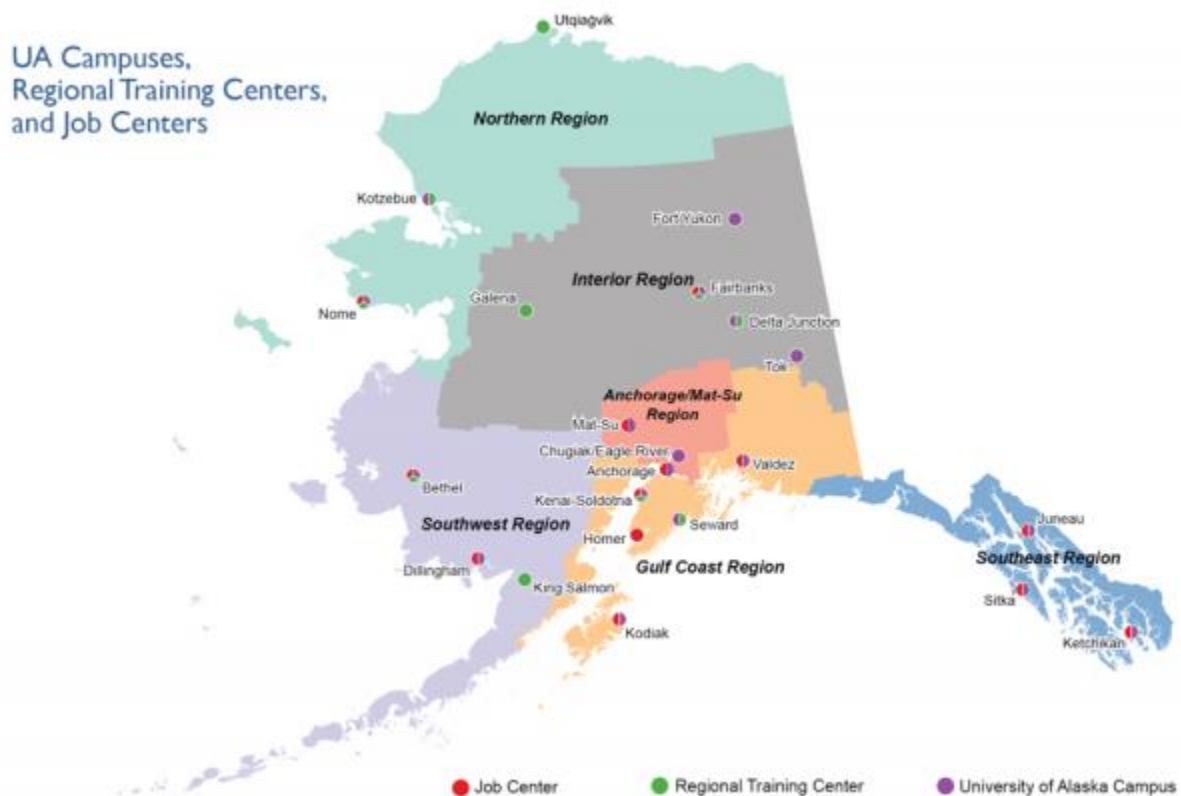
### Regional Training Centers

Alaska's regional training centers (RTCs) are public or non-profit centers whose mission is to develop and provide educational and training activities linked to employment opportunities in the region. Each RTC is governed by a local or regional board and is a partnership comprised of two or more of the following types of organizations: business/industry; Alaska Native regional or community organizations; economic development entities; local boroughs; city, state, federal, and tribal governments; registered apprenticeship programs; K-12 school districts; accredited college and university educational institutions; and DOLWD AJCs. RTCs work closely with the region's employers to provide the training necessary to fill the workforce needs of that region. These programs train over 11,000 students each year. Regional training centers include:

- Alaska Technical Center, Kotzebue - <http://www.nwarctic.org/atc>
- AVTEC, Seward - <https://avtec.edu/>
- Fairbanks Pipeline Training Center, Fairbanks - <http://www.fptcalaska.com/>
- Galena Interior Learning Academy, Galena - <https://www.galenaalaska.org/GILA/>
- Iñisaġvik College, Utqiagvik - <https://www.ilisagvik.edu/>
- Northwestern Alaska Career and Technical Center, Nome - <http://www.nacteonline.org/>
- Partners for Progress in Delta, Inc., Delta - <http://www.partnersforprogressindelta.org/>
- Southwest Alaska Vocational Education Center, King Salmon - <http://www.savec.org/>
- Yuut Elitnaurviat - People's Learning Center, Bethel - <https://yuut.org/>
- UA community campuses - <http://www.alaska.edu/research/wp/ua/>

Figure 14 shows the locations of Job Centers, Regional Training Centers, and University of Alaska campuses across the state.

Figure 14: Job Centers, Regional Training Centers, and UA Campuses



## Training Clearinghouse

DOLWD's Research and Analysis Section maintains the "Alaska Training Clearinghouse," which is a database of postsecondary providers and programs. It lists over 130 training providers offering several hundred training programs in a variety of industries, including the postsecondary programs listed above.

## Performance Measures

Alaska's performance outcomes reflect the department's commitment to continuing improvement of its coordinated and comprehensive workforce development system, and the hard work and dedication of department leadership and program staff. Participants who exit our system are work-ready and obtain and retain jobs paying self-sufficient wages. Alaska has historically met or exceeded performance measures for WIOA Title I, II, III, IV, and Senior Community Service Employment Program, illustrating the state's capacity to provide successful workforce development programs and activities.

## B. STATE STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS

### (1) Vision

Alaska's strategic vision for developing Alaska's workforce and meeting employer needs remains:

"Enhance and improve opportunities for all Alaskans to obtain high skill, high wage jobs and careers by promoting the dignity of work and the value of employment."

Alaska's workforce system will provide the guidance, knowledge, and pathways for Alaska's workforce to acquire the skills Alaskan employers need to become and remain competitive in local, state, and global economies. All Alaskans, including individuals with disabilities, the underserved, Alaska Natives, dislocated workers, and others who experience significant barriers to employment, will have access to the career education, training, and support services needed to prepare for and participate in high-demand occupations that pay family-sustaining wages.

The coordinated effort among workforce partners and agencies will improve the efficiency and performance of Alaska's workforce system. The workforce strategies will strengthen accountability across the system by focusing on education and competency attainment, individual progress, career advancement, and participant employment and earnings through coordination and resource leveraging. This will serve to increase access to career pathway programs and lead to self-sustaining employment while avoiding duplication of services. The Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) will enhance Alaska Job Centers' effectiveness through technology and mobile services that increase outreach to employers and job seekers. The Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) and DOLWD will assess how effectively workforce partners are collaborating to achieve good results and identify areas for improvement or innovation. A central focus will be to reduce program and customer obstacles to improve customer outcomes.

### (2) Goals

#### **(A) Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including preparing youth and individuals with barriers to employment and other populations.**

Goal 1: Build clear routes to careers and/or employment for all Alaskans.

- Enhance and expand career information and guidance for students, parents, guardians, teachers, and counselors, with the help of employers, to engage students in exploring careers and workplaces.
- Increase the life, work-ready, and technical skills of in- and out-of-school youth and adults.
- Help youth transition from high school to post-secondary education, training, and work.



- Assist veterans with barriers to employment transition into the civilian workforce.
- Increase industry-sector focused work-based learning opportunities for youth and adults through internships, school-to-work, pre-apprentice and apprentice training, seasonal employment work experience, and work-study.

Goal 2: Support job opportunities, training opportunities, and career progression opportunities for all Alaskans.

- Provide technical assistance for school district career and technical education partners in connecting youth with the Alaska Job Center Network and career opportunities and pathways.
- Maximize the use of Alaska's Job Centers (AJCs) to provide information on career pathways and opportunities for youth and adults both in-person and virtually.
- Connect youth and adults with disabilities with educational opportunities and employment supports to maximize successful employment retention.
- Improve the ability to accept and transfer credits earned in high school, through apprenticeships, postsecondary education, and college coursework.
- Link veterans with training and educational opportunities in order to optimize career progression.
- Promote competency-based occupational training that reduces the time it takes to complete training and go to work.
- Expand pre-apprentice and apprenticeship opportunities and other work-based learning approaches to youth and adults, including individuals with disabilities and others with significant barriers to training and employment.

(B) Goals for meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers.

Goal 3: Develop multiple pathways for statewide economic stability and job growth.

- Utilize innovative methods of providing uninterrupted services to employers and job seekers during extraordinary circumstances.
- Increase outreach using updated methods, such as virtual meetings, to employers to support career guidance and career awareness activities.
- Cultivate strong long-lasting relationships with employers to advocate for the recruitment and retention of veterans.
- Expand industry sector workforce planning to attract and prepare youth and adults for employment.
- Use labor market research to determine where there are significant labor shortages and determine the occupations in-demand to provide appropriate training opportunities for job seekers.
- Effectively crossmatch and identify current worker skills, including military experience, with skills needed to fill occupations in-demand.
- Connect regional economic and workforce development planning in each economic region to stimulate job creation and growth.
- Expand the utilization of Registered Apprenticeships by industry sector employers to train workers and meet occupational demands.
- Assess how effectively workforce partners are collaborating to achieve good results and identify areas for improvement or innovation.
- Reduce program and administrative and process obstacles to improve customer outcomes.
- Develop focused regional workforce initiatives that blend partner resources (co-investment) to educate and train workers for jobs within the economic region.

### **(3) Performance Goals**

See Appendix 1 - Performance Goals for the Core Programs.

### **(4) Assessment**

#### **(1) Vision**

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## **(2) Goals**

### **(A) Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including preparing youth and individuals with barriers to employment and other populations.**

Goal 1: Build clear routes to careers and/or employment for all Alaskans.

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- Improve the ability to accept and transfer credits earned in high school, through apprenticeships, postsecondary education, and college coursework.
- Link veterans with training and educational opportunities in order to optimize career progression.
- Promote competency-based occupational training that reduces the time it takes to complete training and go to work.
- Expand pre-apprentice and apprenticeship opportunities and other work-based learning approaches to youth and adults, including individuals with disabilities and others with significant barriers to training and employment.

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- Cultivate strong long-lasting relationships with employers to advocate for the recruitment and retention of veterans.
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- Effectively crossmatch and identify current worker skills, including military experience, with skills needed to fill occupations in-demand.
- Connect regional economic and workforce development planning in each economic region to stimulate job creation and growth.
- Expand the utilization of Registered Apprenticeships by industry sector employers to train workers and meet occupational demands.
- Assess how effectively workforce partners are collaborating to achieve good results and identify areas for improvement or innovation.
- Reduce program and administrative and process obstacles to improve customer outcomes.
- Develop focused regional workforce initiatives that blend partner resources (co-investment) to educate and train workers for jobs within the economic region.

**(3) Performance Goals**

See Appendix 1 - Performance Goals for the Core Programs.

**(4) Assessment**

**Accountability Measures**

The state uses the performance accountability measures in Section 116 of WIOA to assess the overall effectiveness of Alaska's workforce investment system and the individual core programs. These measures align well with the strategic vision and goals. DOLWD will negotiate updated performance goals for WIOA programs in spring 2022.

The state also tracks a number of success metrics for its apprenticeship grants, including the number of new Registered Apprenticeship programs, the number of new apprentices, and the number of sponsors and employers providing employment and training services.

### **Industry Sector Partnerships**

DOLWD continues to work with industry sector partners and solicit feedback about how the workforce system, programs, and initiatives are working for employers and training providers and will solicit their ideas for continuous quality improvements.

### **Data Analysis**

DOLWD and the AWIB analyze the data from performance measures and outcomes such as employment and earnings to assess and compare strategies and determine which are working well and which need adjusting. Workforce program results are published annually for policy makers, the public, and the AWIB to further assess programs and comparative outcomes to determine the services and interventions that work and those that are less effective. The participant data and rich labor market information provide a solid platform for deeper and longer-term evaluation of workforce programs.

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## **C. STATE STRATEGY**

### **(c) State Strategy**

#### **1. Strategies related to in-demand industry sectors and occupations and career pathways**

Strategy 1. Engage industry sector partnerships and create career pathways for all Alaskans. The Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) and the department engages industry sector partners from in-demand industries including health care, construction, maritime, oil and gas,

transportation, technology, education, and mining. The AWIB and DOLWD will continue to participate in, and in some cases lead, sector workforce and career planning efforts that include employers and other sector partners (K-12 education; postsecondary education; regional training centers; economic development organizations; labor unions; and other appropriate state agencies). The efforts help update existing workforce plan(s), gauge the status of current workforce development activities, and determine gaps in training both statewide and regionally. These sector specific partnerships also help ensure that education and training investments are prioritized and focused on and responsive to employer needs and that career pathways are accessible to all Alaskans, including all WIOA-targeted populations.

Current labor market information from employers and from DOLWD's Research and Analysis Section informs sector partnerships. Employers are encouraged to work closely with the AWIB, DOLWD, and other partners in developing career pathways to address the needs for the industry from K-12 through postsecondary. Postsecondary is viewed in the broad sense of any education or training that happens after high school, which could include college/university, Registered Apprenticeships, short-term training, industry certification programs, pre-apprenticeship programs, adult education, etc. AJC career specialists and case managers use an industry sector approach to work more effectively with employers and job seekers.

To maintain an understanding of Alaska's workforce needs, each AWIB meeting includes a labor market update, and face to face board meetings feature a panel and discussion with employers sharing information about their industry's training needs and practices and ties to Alaska's Job Center Network.

The Alaska Job Center Network also maintains strong relationships with key employers in these industries through employer services. These relationships allow the department to effectively connect job seekers, through one-stop programs, to training and employment placements. The MOU executed by the AWIB with the One-Stop Operator and WIOA required partners provides for an Alaskan Job Center Network advisory council that facilitate program and regional information sharing about how partners are successfully connecting with industries and employers.

Strategy 2. Expand Registered Apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, and other work-based learning approaches.

Registered Apprenticeship has a proven track record of increasing opportunities for job seekers and assisting employers with the development of a skilled workforce. The governor and the AWIB have determined that the expansion of Registered Apprenticeship programs in Alaska will lead youth and adults, especially those from underserved populations, into good paying jobs with career opportunities, while providing employers with new workers to fill in-demand occupations.

DOLWD has integrated apprenticeship strategies into their business delivery model. The Apprenticeship Coordinator and Apprenticeship Unit Supervisor work closely with Alaska's USDOL Office of Apprenticeship to provide support and technical assistance to employer partners. They also meet with industry partners and associations to promote apprenticeship as a workforce development strategy, encourage the creation of multi-employer sponsorships, and develop new apprenticeship occupations.

The U.S. Department of Labor Alaska Office of Apprenticeship and DOLWD provide ongoing training for Apprenticeship Specialists and Employment Technicians in the process of creating approved programs and informing job seekers and students about the benefits of apprenticeships. Apprenticeship Specialists working in the Job Centers, guided by the

Apprenticeship Unit Supervisor, perform outreach to prospective sponsors to develop new apprenticeship programs and service existing programs. Once a new sponsor registers an apprentice, they are referred to a case manager for financial assistance using WIOA funding, including co-enrollment with apprenticeship expansion grants. DOLWD has seen increased interest from employers in using apprenticeship as a recruitment strategy since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and concomitant labor shortage.

Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC), a division of DOLWD, has created an Apprenticeship Unit and has become a statewide multi-employer sponsor of apprenticeship, starting with Information Technology. AVTEC also supplies related technical instruction to independent sponsors. This unit works closely with Job Center apprenticeship staff to coordinate outreach to prospective sponsors and refer new apprentices for case management and financial assistance.

DOLWD works with apprenticeship intermediaries to create quality pre-apprenticeship programs tailored to the needs of employers and prospective sponsors, including health care and construction. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Pre-Apprenticeship Training for Health Care (PATH) Academy was transferred to an online statewide format.

DOLWD, including our At-Risk Youth team, works with Alaska's Youth Apprenticeship Grant recipient, Alaska Works Partnership; the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development; and local school districts to expand work-based learning opportunities for students and out-of-school youth, including youth with disabilities. This includes school-to-apprenticeship programs, internships, and cooperative learning to strengthen career paths and better prepare young Alaskans for employment in their career field.

Alaska is expanding the participation of colleges joining the Registered Apprenticeship College Consortia so that apprentices earn college credit toward degrees and may transfer the credits to other members of the Consortia. The Apprenticeship Coordinator has partnered with programs that are approved by the American Council on Education to provide distance-delivered Registered Apprenticeship Related Technical Instruction. Alaska colleges are awarding credit to apprentices who successfully complete these programs, which give the apprentices a leg up toward a degree or certificate.

DOLWD has updated its apprenticeship website, created new outreach materials for job seekers and employers, and developed a state apprenticeship plan. More detailed information about Registered Apprenticeship activities is included in Section II (a) 2.A – Workforce Development, Education and Training Activities Analysis.

Strategy 3: Demonstrate innovation in delivery of Alaska Job Center services.

DOLWD has implemented a new online labor exchange and case management system to enhance user experience, co-locate data, and provide a single sign-on for Wagner-Peyser, Veterans Services, WIOA Title I, Trade Act, Alaska Adult Education (AAE), Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), and Unemployment Insurance programs. The new system, AlaskaJobs, allows individuals to enter information into one system when accessing various employment and training programs and benefits.

Alaska Job Centers (AJCs) increased the use of internet service delivery beginning in spring 2020, when mitigation measures in response to the global pandemic required an immediate shift to distance delivery, which continued until June 2021. Best practices developed during this period have been integrated into the current service delivery model, increasing capacity and reach for distance delivery through the internet, partner agencies, and traditional methods. Virtual platforms remain in-place and are continuously refined as part of the overall service delivery strategy for job fairs, career readiness workshops, individualized services, and case

management. As Alaska continues to update its pandemic posture, these service strategies have become woven into available pathways for access to services.

DOLWD continues to review programmatic and individual AJC business processes and customer engagement and develop strategies to capitalize on new efficiencies and increase the depth and breadth of services. AJC services focus on serving WIOA priority populations and connecting residents to career pathways leading to employment and career opportunities. AJCs with co-located programs such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Alaska Adult Education (AAE), and Vocational Rehabilitation, will strengthen the delivery of WIOA core programs within economic regions.

Strategy 4: Prioritize services to target populations.

WIOA funds focus on serving WIOA-defined target populations. Outreach continues to be expanded through regional workforce partners, which helps inform persons with barriers to employment and other target populations of the services that are available to them. Services include career awareness and planning, employment skills, education and training opportunities, job placement, and follow-up services. DOLWD continues to enhance the connection among the systems and programs that serve the targeted populations. Alaska's high priority target populations are:

- Youth and adults with disabilities
- Alaska Natives
- Veterans and transitioning service members
- Out-of-school youth
- Returning citizens
- Unemployed and underemployed
- Individuals with multiple barriers to training and employment
- At-risk youth
- Homeless individuals

DOLWD's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) will continue to provide training for AJC and partner staff working with clients who have disabilities to increase referrals to DVR. DVR uses vocational evaluation services and local labor market surveys to ensure individuals with disabilities are provided informed choice to foster the pursuit of career pathways in high-demand industries and apprenticeship opportunities. DVR partners with WIOA core programs to maximize services to individuals with disabilities and coordinate services to promote successful employment outcomes.

The Department of Health and Social Services developed a website called "Disability Benefits 101," an online tool for those with disabilities that provides available work incentives and helps individuals determine how their Social Security Insurance, Social Security Disability Insurance, or other public benefits may be impacted by employment. The Achieving a Better Life Experience Act (ABLE) allows eligible persons with disabilities to secure a "taxed advantaged" savings account of up to \$100,000 without affecting public benefit limits. Calculating benefits and ABLE savings is a critical tool for achieving quality long-term outcomes. DVR works with Work Incentives Planning & Assistance Projects to ensure there is a system with multiple partners to meet the needs of Alaska's youth and adults with disabilities by expanding access to employment and career pathways to prepare for in-demand careers through comprehensive access to benefits planning by certified Community Work Incentive Counselors (CWICs).

Alaska's "Employment First" legislation calls for "competitive integrated employment" as the preferred outcome for those with disabilities. DOLWD has executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services Senior and

Disability Services and is working on an MOU with the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development to ensure progress towards that goal. The MOU includes commitments for active participation on the Alaska Interagency Transition Council on Employment First. DVR partners with employers to promote the hiring of individuals with disabilities and utilizes a dual customer model to work with employers to provide human resource services and connections to potential employees. DVR has hired an Employment First Coordinator to promote industry sector partnerships with businesses in industries that are both high-demand and high-wage.

Through Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), DVR provides the following required activities to students with disabilities (14- to 21-year-olds) who are eligible or potentially eligible for vocational rehabilitation services: (1) job exploration counseling, (2) work-based learning opportunities, (3) counseling on postsecondary educational opportunities (4) workplace readiness training, and (5) instruction in self-advocacy. Pre-ETS implementation has increased transition coordination among local school districts and DVR.

DOLWD works with Alaska Native organizations already engaged in workforce development activities to ensure services are provided as widely as possible while avoiding duplication.

DOLWD continues to participate in Alaska's Returning Citizens Initiative in partnership with the Alaska Department of Corrections to assist youth and adults leaving correctional facilities in obtaining gainful employment and connecting to a career path. DOLWD secured a two-year Linking to Employment Pre-release grant intended to reduce recidivism. The program provided 600 pre-release inmates with career services, 200 of whom enrolled in the nine-week individualized Bridge to Success curriculum.

DOLWD works with agencies such as Catholic Social Services to support refugees, asylum seekers, and other immigrants in improving their skills and pursuing education, training, and sustainable employment in alignment with the White House Task Force on New Americans Plan developed with the participation of the Municipality of Anchorage.

DOLWD works with Alaska's military leadership in providing training and employment opportunities to veterans and transitioning service members. DOLWD works with the Soldier for Life and Airmen for Life transition centers to assist with career path training for Transitioning Services Members, preparing them for employment in Alaska as they leave military service. The military-approved training providers creates pre-apprentice and occupational training pathways to priority industry jobs.

Strategy 5: Partner with other agencies, organizations, and programs to leverage resources. DOLWD will continue and expand its partnerships with other agencies and organizations. While the following list is not all-inclusive, below are some examples of partnership development and partner programs:

- Alaska AFL-CIO
- Alaska Apprenticeship Training Coordinators Association
- Alaska Association for Career and Technical Education
- Alaska Health Workforce Coalition
- Alaska Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Eielson Air Force Base, and Fort Wainwright Military Transition Services
- Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority
- Alaska Native Organizations
- Alaska Native Coalition for Employment and Training



- Alaska Native Regional Employment and Training Entities
- Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium
- Alaska Performance Scholarship Program
- Alaska Postsecondary Access and Completion Network
- Alaska Primary Care Association
- Alaska Regional Economic Development Organizations
- Alaska Safety Alliance
- Alaska state agencies such as Departments of Corrections; Health and Social Services; Administration; Commerce, Community, and Economic Development; Education & Early Development
- Alaska Vocational Technical Center
- Alaska Works Partnership, Inc.
- Alaska Youth Works (Alaska Mental Health Trust Program)
- Alaska Youth Works (Disability Employment Initiative)
- Anchorage Literacy Project
- Catholic Social Services - Refugee Assistance and Immigration Services
- Fairbanks Pipeline Training Center
- Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education
- Joint-Administered Training Trusts
- Northern Industrial Training, Inc.
- Regional Training Centers
- Renewable Energy Alaska Project
- Sponsors of Federal Registered Apprenticeship Programs
- University of Alaska Statewide Office for Workforce Development
- University of Alaska and Community Campuses
- USDOL Office of Apprenticeship in Anchorage

Strategy 6: Streamline internal processes by creating full integration of programs and services. DOLWD has taken steps to streamline internal processes by creating full integration of programs and services, including the following:

#### Grants/Systems Support Realignment

In July 2019, the Commissioner of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development realigned the grants unit under the Alaska Workforce Investment Board. This realignment ensures greater coordination and efficiency of workforce investment dollars in the state. The realignment is consistent with the WIOA State Plan and elevates the status of the grants unit to be consistent with other state models.

#### Alaska Workforce Investment Board Grants Unit

The AWIB grants unit is led by an executive director along with an assistant director overseeing the following programs and initiatives:

- WIOA Youth
- Apprenticeship
- At Risk Youth
- State Training Employment Program
- Technical Vocational Education Program
- Career and Technical Education

#### Policy Review

Reorganization required developing a policy adopting prior policies of the Division of Employment Training Services.

#### Integrity, Program Assessments, and Grants

The AWIB provides integrity for the allocation and use of public resources and the assessment, evaluation, and continuous improvement of workforce strategies and programs.

AWIB staff prepare public solicitations for grants and perform due diligence to assure all applicants considered for funding meet the application requirements. Grant administrators assist with the collection of grant applications and assist the AWIB with independent grant application reviews. AWIB members independently review applications, make recommendations to the commissioner for awarding grants, and ensure integrity in award, denial, and appeal of decision processes.

#### Other

DOLWD works with the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE) in streamlining processes for DOLWD grantees and Eligible Training Providers by sharing information between the two agencies regarding the status of training providers' compliance with ACPE regulations.

DOLWD coordinates with the University of Alaska and the Department of Education & Early Development on education and workforce issues such as continued implementation of the Alaska Career and Technical Education Plan; dual and concurrent credit for high school students; aligning secondary and postsecondary programs to industry standards and industry needs; and partnering to provide pre-apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship opportunities.

Strategy 7. Promote job creation and workforce development opportunities identified by regional data.

The Research and Analysis Section of DOLWD publishes employment, unemployment, wage, and population data for all of Alaska's economic regions and regularly profiles different parts of the state to identify their key economic drivers (fishing, mining, oil and gas, tourism, military, etc.) in its monthly publication Alaska Economic Trends. Below are a few recent examples of those types of regional or local-area articles:

- <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/trends/split/jan22art3.pdf>
- <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/trends/split/jan22art4.pdf>
- <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/trends/split/jan22art2.pdf>

Strategy 8: Actively engage at-risk youth and provide immediate accessibility to program services.

DVR, along with other DOLWD programs and the Office of Children's Services, has created a task force to address the needs of at-risk youth exiting the foster care and juvenile justice systems. DVR plays a lead role in ensuring vocational rehabilitation services are provided to youth who experience disabilities to increase the likelihood of success and independence through employment.

## **(2) Strategies to Align Programs**

All core programs and the combined plan partner program - Senior Community Service Employment Program - are administered by DOLWD. All the strategies listed under Section (c) State Strategy (1) serve to align the core and partners and programs, as well as other entities in the state's education, workforce, and economic development arena. Staff members from each program meet regularly to discuss operational strategies aligned with the goals. These meetings identify areas of alignment that create efficiencies and increase program benefit to Alaskans. This includes cross-program training, AJC staff training, DOLWD policy changes, communication strategies, and frequent reviews of performance metrics.

DOLWD engages One-Stop partners (See Appendix 2.2) on a regular basis to further implement state workforce programs and to coordinate activities regionally to ensure the focus on WIOA target populations while supplying good job and apprentice applicants for employers and apprenticeship sponsors. Key projects include improving services for persons with disabilities, expanding Registered Apprenticeships, modernizing AJCs and service delivery, and increasing services for youth and adults reentering society - all of which require continuous program review and coordinated activities among partners.

### **Strategies to Strengthen Activities Regarding Identified Weaknesses**

**Weakness:** A continued challenge is Alaska's geographic size and diverse population, which makes access to education, training, and apprenticeships uniquely challenging. The state's largest cities are connected by road, but a large portion of the state is accessible only by air or water, and travel may be expensive and time-consuming. There is often the additional challenge of cultural differences for people coming from village settings to urban areas. Those challenges create a unique need for distance delivery of employment and training services and, in many cases, for funds to cover travel and housing when training can only be completed in-person.

**Strategy:** Alaska's strategies include making employment and training services available via the internet and smart phones; supporting local rural resources such as libraries and tribal council offices to provide public internet access to employment and training services in areas without an AJC; and strengthening partnerships with rural organizations, such as tribal organizations, to co-enroll and share the costs of travel and housing when participants must travel to attend training.

**Weakness:** Rural/remote communities continue to lag in internet speed and technology capacity. Many people living in remote communities, including students, teachers, employers, and job seekers, simply do not have access to the electronic tools and abilities to learn skills, apply for jobs, or receive on-line services on a par with those living in the city because of the lack of technology infrastructure.

**Strategy:** DOLWD continues to strengthen partnerships with the University of Alaska rural campuses, state funded technical and vocational education program locations, and local governments to identify access to the best internet access available in as broad an area as possible so rural residents will have access to employment and training services via the internet. Alaska implemented a new integrated labor exchange and case management system (AlaskaJobs) that allows clients to access services through one portal. Mobile device access is included as a part of this new system, allowing greater access to rural participants. Mobile device usage in rural Alaska continues to increase and is becoming a primary internet access method.

**Weakness:** Many employers report a lack of motivated job seekers with basic employability skills to fill community jobs. There are many causes: personal issues such as substance abuse and system issues such as the lack of local career pathway programs, and few qualified instructors and available mentors.

**Strategy:** Alaska promotes the ACT Career Ready 101 Soft Skills Suite in job centers as an individualized service or workshop for jobseekers' initial visits specifically to address the lack of motivated job seekers with basic employability skills. The workshops also introduce other Career Ready 101 courses, WorkKeys assessments, and the National Career Readiness Certificate for jobseekers. Alaska has promoted WorkKeys for several years, and the certificate gives job seekers a document they can reference on their resume and include with their interview packet that will give them an advantage in the job application process. Alaska encourages employers to recognize, request, and/or require the certificate, knowing it can save them money in their hiring, training, and succession planning activities.

Weakness: Remote rural communities do not have good access to job training, apprenticeships, colleges, and trade schools.

Strategy: The University of Alaska fulfills the community college mission through its rural campuses across the state. They and other training providers, such as state funded technical and vocational programs, are increasing their training programs available via distance delivery. DOLWD supports distance delivered training by funding participant tuition through Individual Training Accounts where appropriate. Where distance delivery is not available, DOLWD seeks out local organizations such as Alaska Native Tribal organizations to co-enroll rural participants and share the costs of travel and housing for participants to attend job and apprenticeship trainings not available in their local area.

Weakness: Limited English proficiency is a significant barrier to learning and employment as is the inability to recognize foreign education degrees and occupational credentials.

Strategy: Alaska Job Center (AJC) staff refer limited English-speaking customers to the Department's WIOA Title II Alaska Adult Education programs. Customers holding foreign education degrees meet individually with Employment Services Technicians in the job centers to work on a plan to have their degrees recognized and/or to find work in their field of study.

Weakness: Alaska's seasonal tourism-related industries suffered during the pandemic. Alaska employers are anticipating a return to previous workforce demands after an almost complete stoppage in the industry in 2020 and a partial return in 2021.

Strategy: With the return of a full cruise ship season, the state expects to welcome over 1.5 million passengers in 2022, with the potential of an all-time high number of passenger visits to Alaska if ships reach capacity. Demand on industry and supporting workforce will be high. Alaska is working closely with industry groups and employers to recruit for positions through AlaskaJobs, direct customer referral, and industry specific job fairs (both traditional and virtual) and recruitment sessions.

### III. OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

#### A. STATE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

##### 1. STATE BOARD FUNCTIONS

As the governor's lead workforce policy entity, the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) reviews statewide programs and policies to ensure Alaska's workforce system is useful, accessible, and understandable to all customers. This includes businesses seeking qualified workers, unemployed Alaskans looking for jobs, and incumbent workers wanting to upgrade their skills to meet the demands of a changing work environment.

AWIB members are appointed by the governor, and the AWIB is supported by an Executive Director, an assistant director, five full-time program coordinators, two grants administrators, and one administrative assistant. The AWIB operates according to Alaska statutory requirements and board bylaws. A Chair and Vice-Chair are elected annually and serve for one year. The AWIB makes formal decisions during its full board meetings; in between these meetings, the Executive Committee, composed of the Chairs of each standing committee and the current and past Chair and current Vice-Chair, are authorized by its bylaws to make decisions on behalf of the AWIB. Staff keep track of action items and next steps necessary to complete them. The Executive Director works with the Executive Committee in setting meeting agendas and activities to ensure all functions are carried out.

Organizationally, the AWIB is housed under the Commissioner of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD). The vision of the AWIB is “to build connections that put Alaskans into good jobs.” The AWIB achieves this vision by utilizing labor market data and regional and sector stakeholder input to guide DOLWD in continuous improvement of Alaska’s workforce system. The AWIB develops a statewide workforce investment policy framework and drives coordination and collaboration among programs and agencies.

The AWIB is proactive in identifying and utilizing labor market data to identify priority industries to target for employment training and investment and has developed or supported workforce-training plans for these industries. The AWIB has also been deeply engaged in creating a strong career pathway system through the statewide Alaska Career and Technical Education (CTE) Plan and has endorsed workforce development plans for the health care, transportation, construction, oil and gas, mining, and maritime industries. The AWIB remains actively engaged with priority sectors in Alaska on workforce strategies.

Identifying areas of improvement is a top priority for the AWIB, and it is active in the assessment and evaluation of Alaska Job Centers (AJCs). In addition to monitoring Job Center sites, the AWIB assesses WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, Dislocated Worker Training-National Emergency Grant, and National Emergency Grant funds.

The AWIB is actively engaged in training programs targeted for youth and other Alaska residents. The AWIB participates in the evaluation of training and education grants, and through this process, emphasizes investment in training for individuals who experience barriers to employment, as well as utilizing labor market analysis to recommend investment in programs that prepare Alaskans for high-demand occupations in priority industries.

To fulfill its role of guiding DOLWD through oversight of training programs, the AWIB coordinated the preparation of this updated WIOA State Plan. As an additional measure of WIOA core program success, AWIB members receive regular program updates at their business meetings.

The AWIB was engaged, and their feedback solicited, during the process to update this plan. The full AWIB discussed the updated WIOA Combined Plan at its February 24, 2022, meeting. External stakeholder feedback was solicited and considered in the update. The Board’s Executive Committee approved the Combined Plan Update on March 8, 2022. Per AWIB bylaws, the Executive Committee can act on behalf of the full board and supervise the affairs of the Board between regular meetings.

## 2. IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STRATEGY

### A. CORE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES TO IMPLEMENT THE STATE’S STRATEGY

DOLWD supports integration of services through a single delivery system for both businesses and individuals. This efficient use of resources includes integrating all WIOA core programs with Unemployment Insurance (UI), veterans’ programs, the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program, apprenticeship, and sector partnership development.

The WIOA core programs are delivered through 14 AJCs located throughout the state, ten

vocational rehabilitation offices, five of which are co-located with the AJCs, eleven WIOA Youth Program subrecipients, and 15 Alaska Adult Education (AAE) subrecipients. SCSEP is co-located within the Division of Employment and Training Services (DETS) Job Centers, and staff work closely with its integrated partners to ensure that participants are co-enrolled with other appropriate employment services. Program staff are trained to refer customers to the programs and resources that best fit their needs.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused the AJCs to temporarily close. After developing effective strategies to allow participants better access to technology, safe transportation program testing, secure document signature and transmission, and training via online delivery in high growth sectors due to pandemic-related closures, job centers re-opened to public access on June 1, 2021, better able to serve Alaskans across the state now and in the future.

All core programs and the combined plan partner program - Senior Community Service Employment Program - are housed under DOLWD. These programs serve to align the core partners and programs, as well as other entities in the state's education, workforce, and economic development arena. Staff members from each program have bi-monthly meetings to discuss operational strategies aligned with the goals. These meetings will continue to identify areas where alignment is required. This includes cross-program training, AJC staff training, DOLWD policy changes, communication strategies, and frequent reviews of performance outcomes.

DOLWD engages One-Stop partners on a regular basis to further implement state workforce programs and to coordinate activities regionally to ensure the focus on WIOA target populations, while supplying good job applicants and apprentice applicants for employers and apprentice sponsors. Key projects include improving services for persons with disabilities, expanding Registered Apprenticeships, modernization of AJCs and service delivery, and increasing services for youth and adults reentering society - all of which require constant program review and coordinated activities among partners.

## **B. ALIGNMENT WITH ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE PLAN**

### **Core and One-Stop Partners**

Core program staff and partners continuously work towards an integrated partnership that seamlessly incorporates services to fit customer needs. Core and One-Stop partners meet regularly to collaborate on operational policies, procedures, and best practices for an integrated system of performance. Communication and the use of technology help to integrate and expand service offerings to achieve success.

DOLWD works with other state agencies, mandatory One-Stop partners, the University of Alaska, Alaska Native Corporations, private-sector employers, trade associations, and Joint Apprenticeship Training Programs to develop high-wage, high-demand employment and training plans that make the most of existing Registered Apprenticeship and other training models. These training plans have an increased focus on industry sectors and career pathways under WIOA.

Industry representatives help drive decisions and design of workforce solutions as shown in successful public-private partnerships for training apprentices and skilled workers for pipeline construction and maintenance on Alaska's North Slope. The training partnership includes contractors, labor organizations, Joint Apprenticeship Training Programs, and the State Training and Employment Program, which all provide opportunities for workers from across the state to attend pipeline construction courses.

## **TANF**

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Tribal TANF programs are used as a primary engagement and recruitment mechanism to identify and enroll appropriate low-income Alaskans into Career and Training Services offered through WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, Wagner-Peyser, and other programs specific to client need and eligibility, such as the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program. At locations throughout the state, DOLWD staff engage with the Division of Public Assistance (DPA) or their contractor's Work First/Families First program to identify individuals on their caseload to be co-enrolled with services offered through the AJCs. In locations served through Tribal TANF, the partnerships are being expanded with each of the seven programs in the state to ensure that collaboration and co-enrollment is promoted. These activities identify additional barriers to employment, allow for a complete employment plan with direct or partner supports to overcome barriers, and continue the progress towards sustainable employment for the individual.

## **Alaska Job Centers and Partners**

The AJCs provide access and outreach to areas with higher numbers of low-income Alaskans. The AJCs provide a critical pathway to Career and Training Services through their physical locations, partner linkages, online presence, and itinerant services. Local coordination with partners, such as the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, TANF, Alaska Native entities, area correctional facility release programs, and regional training centers, promotes cross-referrals to services that address barriers to employment and facilitate attachment to employment or training. Apprenticeship and On-the-Job Training (OJT) are particularly beneficial for low-income individuals and those reentering the workforce after incarceration, due to the immediate attachment to the community and to income.

## **Senior Community Service Employment Program**

The AJCs partner with the state's SCSEP, branded as Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training (MASST). AJCs provide customer service training; training on the use of job search tools, resume writing, and interviewing; and job placement through referral and application or job development. The state provides a wide range of programs and services to seniors, spanning multiple divisions and other private and public entities. Funds from the Older Americans Act (OAA) are leveraged with WIOA, other federal programs, and resources from the Alaska State Training and Employment Program (STEP), assuring coordination and avoiding duplication of services or activities. The programs provide local training in priority industry sectors by placing participants in community work-based training sites at non-profit, faith-based organizations, transportation, governmental offices, senior centers, schools, and hospitals, to name a few.

## **Referrals**

The referral process among the core programs is implemented individually depending on the specific needs of the client. All DOLWD staff are trained and knowledgeable in the requirements and eligibility of other core programs to ensure appropriate referrals, which are necessary to leverage resources and maximize service delivery to individuals while ensuring non-duplication of services. For example, AJC staff who provide initial intake and career services have been trained to ask follow-up questions to individuals that have identified they are experiencing a disability to determine if a referral to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation, or other supporting entities is appropriate. This training has provided a high level of thoughtfulness to the reason for each referral, increasing the success for the participant. Coordinated data collection captures cross-agency referrals. Additionally, AJCs keep a list of local resources pertinent to their service area to review for appropriate referrals and as a handout to provide to individuals.

### C. COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS

DOLWD is the lead agency for the administration of the four core WIOA programs. DOLWD is also responsible for TAA, UI, and Veteran Services through the Jobs for Veterans State Grant. Additionally, the SCSEP, operated as MASST, is also within DOLWD and is the Combined State Plan partner program. Whether through direct service or subrecipients, the AJCs are primary access points for employment services provided by DOLWD's programs.

DOLWD manages Title V of the Older Americans Act (OAA) for senior employment. The planned action to coordinate activities includes following labor and education directives and guidance from health and social services programs in developing the workforce needs. SCSEP is aligned with the state's commitment to economic development, and its workforce development programs rely on the broad strategic policy decisions of the AWIB and Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA).

Partners collaborate to develop policies, procedures, and best practices to facilitate the integration of services to ensure job seekers' needs are being met and referrals to other resources are successful.

AJC partners are committed to co-enrollment to deliver customer-focused, integrated, and coordinated services. This includes the sharing of relevant customer program information and records such as referral information, assessment results, training plans, progress reports, and job-development strategies. Co-enrollment is encouraged to coordinate cohesive and consistent services that complement and strengthen the services offered by each individual program. The coordination of services, including referrals, is supported by DETS/AWIB/DVR Policy 07-505.1, which promotes cooperative partnerships to maximize resources. The policy encourages program staff and grant subrecipients to develop procedures for co-enrollment. Local management teams representing partner agencies at the AJCs work collaboratively to ensure that services provided in the locality are coordinated and non-duplicative. Customer flow, shared resources, co-enrollment, special initiatives/programs, and area workforce needs are addressed collectively.

Alaska Adult Education (AAE) has a required intake document that gathers information about each student's employment status and training goals. AAE programs also teach a career and college awareness class that includes discussing what is available in the community and through workforce partners.

The workforce system aligns services with those most in need and who can be served through efficient and effective strategies. Efficient strategies support the timely delivery of services through a process that is aligned with the priorities of the AWIB. Effective strategies ensure job seekers and employers receive services based on their needs and circumstances.

DOLWD's objective is to maintain a fully integrated workforce development system that ensures availability of workforce services to all customers, with a focus on veterans and military spouses, low-income individuals, public assistance recipients, adults and youth with disabilities, out-of-school youth, Alaska Natives, and individuals with barriers to employment.

### D. COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO EMPLOYERS

The relationship between DOLWD and industry sector employers is critical to Alaska's workforce investment system. DOLWD continuously looks for ways to develop cooperative working relationships based on Alaska employer needs, and this creates lasting partnerships with the business community.



### **Business Connection Staff**

Employer service representatives, particularly Business Connection staff, pay attention to local labor market trends to match employers with skilled job seekers. Staff work with employers to coordinate recruitments, plan job fairs, post job orders, provide applicant pre-screening and referrals, develop jobs, provide space for job recruitments, and offer employment and training service plans. Using a mass e-mail distribution list of employers and other interested parties, staff send daily messages on new job postings, recruitments at the AJCs, and upcoming job fairs. DOLWD has identified health care, transportation, oil and gas, and mining industries as the highest-demand industries and continually engages industry leaders in these fields. Under WIOA, Business Connection staff have received more in-depth training to work with the various industry sector partnerships to meet training and labor needs for those industries.

### **Services and Programs**

Employer services and programs available through AJCs include:

- Veteran services provided by a full-time veteran employment specialist who conducts outreach to employers to advocate for veteran hire;
- Youth services provided by eleven youth program grant recipients, which coordinate career pathways development, and work experience opportunities with businesses to ensure young job seekers are prepared to enter the job market;
- Apprenticeship specialists in AJCs who increase employer involvement in Registered Apprenticeships (RAP). Benefits to employers may include reduced turnover, a skilled workforce, and training is customizable;
- On-the-Job Training (OJT) that offers employers the opportunity to hire and custom train employees and receive partial employee wage reimbursements;
- Employers may apply for State Training and Employment Program (STEP) grants when seeking training to enhance employee skills to meet industry demands for skilled workers;
- Training based on current employer demands (including incumbent worker training) and the perceived needs of the future job market;
- Rapid Response services, including employee protection and layoff aversion strategies to companies facing layoffs and closures;
- Seafood processing and other specialized recruitments, job fairs, workshops, orientations, and interviews;
- Information resources for occupational forecasts, wage and labor laws, occupational safety, layoff aversion, and Workers' Compensation insurance;
- Hire incentives like tax credits and Fidelity Bonding that encourage employers to hire at-risk workers; and
- Referral to local Alaska Adult Education programs and other partner programs.

### **Alaska Career Ready**

Alaska recognizes the gaps between job seekers' education, training, and skills and those that Alaska employers request or require. The Alaska Career Ready program uses ACT WorkKeys to help fill those gaps. WorkKeys assessments help job seekers earn the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC), a portable credential that certifies their essential, verifiable workplace skills. The foundational skills certified by the NCRC are recognized and used by thousands of employers nationwide. WorkKeys assessments are proctored in-person at Alaska Job Centers, at no cost to job seekers or employers, and are a valuable tool for job seekers, employers, and case managers to help identify skill gaps and training needs. WorkKeys Curriculum online courseware is used to prepare for the assessments and does not require in-person interaction with staff. The curriculum helps increase assessment scores while enhancing cognitive foundational skills required for success in the workplace.

### **Employer Relationships and Outreach**

Business Connection staff members build trusting, long-term relationships with Alaska employers from small businesses to large industries. Promotion of DOLWD's employment and training programs is based on meeting employer needs. It emphasizes the benefits to employers and avoids the impression of a "hard-sell" or bombardment with unwanted information. These relationships also ensure employers view DOLWD as a valuable resource. For example, DOLWD fosters relationships with mining industry employers and works closely with the University of Alaska Southeast mining training program to fill positions with Alaska workers, taking advantage of an annual underground miner training and incumbent worker training, including haul truck simulator training, in Southeast Alaska. The goal is to provide Juneau-area mining employers such as Hecla Greens Creek and Coeur Alaska Kensington with qualified Alaska workers.

Exploration of new outreach methods that can reach many employers at once, and material with better content, are intended to increase employer awareness of DOLWD employment and training resources. For example, the apprenticeship and veteran programs are working to determine the best ways to use GI Bill, WIOA, and STEP funds to support apprenticeship and other training opportunities for Alaska's veterans.

DOLWD's tax and employer services units established a cost-effective, mutually beneficial method of employer outreach. The exchange of material reaches an average of 20 employers per week. It includes employment and training information such as Alaska Career Ready, veterans' services, and OJTs as part of the new or returning-employer packets mailed by the tax unit. In return, AJC Business Connection staff help alleviate overflow calls to the tax unit by promoting web-based tax self-registration to employers with whom they come into contact. An apprenticeship brochure is included in the new-employer packet to highlight significant wage incentives for hiring a veteran into an apprenticeship program. This supports the state's WIOA strategies of expanding Registered Apprenticeships and focusing on veterans and transitioning service members as a priority population.

### **Website**

DOLWD has revised its web pages that are specific to employer needs. The Business Connection page focuses on the most requested employer services under easily identifiable general headings with associated topics underneath. The overarching theme of the modification is to answer the question, "What is the benefit to the employer?" For example, the heading "Protect Your Workers" leads employers to topics including TAA, Layoff Aversion Strategies, Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification requirements, and COBRA continuation of employee health care benefits. Other main headings include Post a Job, Employment and Labor Laws, Hire Leadership and Experience (veterans), and Hiring Incentives.

### **Employer Recognition for Veteran Hire**

DOLWD promotes the HIRE Vets Medallion Program, the only federal-level veterans' employment award that recognizes employers who hire veterans. Award recipient recognition includes public identification of the business by public service announcements and identification on the AlaskaJobs system. Employers who participate in the annual Veterans Job Fair are recognized both in writing and verbally for supporting the hiring of Alaska veterans and family members. Furthermore, Business Connection and veteran staff will increase their presence at regular meetings of the Society for Human Resources Management and local chambers of commerce meetings in Juneau, Anchorage, and Fairbanks.

### **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) partners with employers to promote the hiring of individuals with disabilities. DVR has implemented the dual customer model to deliver services to employers. DVR has created a Business Employment Services Team (DVR-BEST), which is tasked with providing employers with the four required services as outlined in Section 109 of the Rehabilitation Act within WIOA, to secure competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities, which is part of DOLWD's strategy to focus on serving those with disabilities.

### **Senior Community Service Employment Program**

SCSEP's service delivery is integrated into both the state's workforce investment system and the senior service system. Employers have reported high satisfaction levels with SCSEP participants who have entered unsubsidized employment with them. Employers have reported that they have experience with computers, and proficiency in other languages, and are motivated, friendly, and reliable. Alaska's long-term strategy is to continue to reach out to workforce development partners, the business community, and social service partners to ensure successful outcomes for workers and Alaska businesses alike.

DOLWD strives to provide outstanding customer service to employers by focusing on long-term, respectful relationships; understanding and responding to their employment and training needs; and promoting and providing consequential services and resources that meet those needs. DOLWD will continue to meet or exceed the expectations of employers to include excellent performance outcomes for mutual workforce goals.

## **E. PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

Alaska understands the vital role training providers play in workforce development and the need to focus attention on an effective career and technical training system. The state has pledged to create world-class schools that prepare graduates for careers that may begin immediately after high school graduation or may require additional education and training.

The DOLWD is committed to assuring individuals with disabilities have access to all educational institutions and training providers. The Division of Employment and Training Services (DETS) and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) are committed to delivering customer-focused, integrated, and coordinated services. This includes determining and coordinating education and training opportunities to individuals with disabilities. DOLWD grant recipients providing education and training opportunities are responsible for providing access to individuals with disabilities.

### **Career and Technical Education Plan**

A comprehensive Alaska Career and Technical Education (CTE) Plan was approved by the AWIB in 2010 and involved a broad cross-section of policy makers, educators, employers, state agencies, training institutions, and parent representatives. The AWIB and the Departments of Education & Early Development and Labor and Workforce Development, in coordination with the University of Alaska, have continued to meet on a regular basis to implement, review, and refine CTE strategies.

The 2010 Alaska CTE Plan recognized six key strategies to strengthen Alaska's CTE system and the need for career preparedness and an education and training system that is efficient, effective, and coordinates with regional and state current and future workforce needs. The CTE Plan strategies that remain relevant to improving CTE programs include:

- Ensure planned transitions and accountability for both successful student progress and systemic cooperation;
- Align curricula at all training institutions to meet current industry standards;

- Identify and promote CTE delivery models that ensure that Alaskans have opportunities to attain the knowledge and skills needed for further training and careers;
- Recruit, develop, support, and retain high-quality CTE teachers and faculty;
- Maximize the use of public facilities for training; and
- Establish and maintain sustainable funding mechanisms for a successful CTE system for youth and adults.

In 2017, the AWIB convened a workgroup of CTE professionals to review the 2010 Alaska CTE Plan and draft an updated addendum to reenergize CTE programs statewide, reexamine the existing CTE Plan strategies, and create an advocacy vehicle identifying the education and training opportunities available in Alaska. The update included feedback from stakeholder groups including employers and private sector businesses through in-person presentations, webinars, and online surveys. The updated plan was approved by the AWIB in October 2018, as the 2018 Addendum to the Alaska CTE Plan. The Addendum is listed on the AWIB Plans, Policies, Initiatives webpage <https://awib.alaska.gov/ppi.htm>. The direct link for the Addendum in PDF format is [https://awib.alaska.gov/CTE\\_Addendum\\_10-2018.pdf](https://awib.alaska.gov/CTE_Addendum_10-2018.pdf).

During the review of the Alaska CTE Plan and development of the 2018 addendum, several topics consistently arose related to implementation of the CTE strategies and on-going system improvement which included the following:

- Promote CTE as a skills-based model that prepares Alaskans for high wage jobs;
- Leverage existing workforce planning efforts and CTE programs that lead to employment outcomes;
- Communicate with partners to promote programs and avoid duplication of effort; and
- Advocate for increased investment in CTE programs.

### **Technical Vocational Education Program**

One of the funding mechanisms for Alaska CTE is through the Technical Vocational Education Program (TVEP), which provides state funding through a portion of unemployment taxes to designated technical training entities to provide industry specific training, OJT, and classroom-linked job training. Grant funds are appropriated by the Alaska Legislature and administered by DOLWD, the Department of Education & Early Development, and the University of Alaska. The AWIB establishes a list of industry priorities for training under this program.

State education and training providers are critical to prepare Alaskans to be successful with the academic and technical knowledge required for a specific career pathway. Programs of study incorporate industry and business standards and are validated using benchmarks, assessments, and a body of evidence to demonstrate that job seekers are prepared to be successful in their chosen career.

### **Community Colleges and Area Career and Technical Schools**

Alaska no longer has separate community colleges; rather, the community college mission is carried out by the University of Alaska (UA) through its Statewide Office of Workforce Development and the programs offered at its network of community campuses. DOLWD is in regular contact with UA and with the state's career and technical schools (as defined in the Carl Perkins CTE Improvement Act of 2006), including both secondary and postsecondary programs. Members of the AWIB represent these providers (university workforce programs and secondary and postsecondary CTE) and provide information to the AWIB as they develop recommendations for coordination and alignment of the state's workforce system. DOLWD meets annually with secondary and postsecondary CTE coordinators and directors to align programs and discuss issues of mutual interest. In addition, DOLWD meets monthly with the

state's CTE plan lead partners to continue implementation of the CTE plan and CTE system.

#### F. PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS

The state routinely engages with partners and other education and training providers. An example is the Eligible Training Providers List (ETPL) policy and procedures, which were created in concert with education and training providers who provided feedback during AWIB meetings and a public comment period. The largest provider, the University of Alaska, was integral in providing feedback during the drafting of the ETPL process. The AWIB played an active role in reviewing guidance, and the education and training board members provided critical feedback that was incorporated with the final products. The goal is to make the ETPL a robust product that offers training to meet the needs of Alaska's high growth industries while making the ETPL process less cumbersome for education and training providers.

#### G. LEVERAGING RESOURCES TO INCREASE EDUCATIONAL ACCESS

Alaska leverages resources as a strategy to increase and sustain economic growth. This practice fosters enhanced partnerships between federal, state, local, and private resources in innovative ways, relying on three different levels of leveraged resources.

First, cash contributions are state, local, and private resources that are allocated in direct support of a training project. A state general fund appropriation is an example of a cash contribution. Second, in-kind contributions are federal, state, local, and private resources that support the efforts of a training project but are not easily cost allocated. Third, Alaska applies federal and state resources as potential leveraged funds that are consistent with the economic and workforce development goals of the state, preparing Alaska workers for employment in high-wage, high-demand occupations.

At the community-based participant level, AJC partners conduct joint planning and case management to maximize resources, providing individuals with comprehensive services. By working together for the common benefit of participants, each partner agency can reach more participants and ensure comprehensive services.

#### H. IMPROVING ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS

The workforce and education systems work closely to expand the supply of skilled workers for Alaska's high-growth industries. Through partnership with the DOLWD, University of Alaska, and Department of Education & Early Development, the AWIB developed the Alaska CTE Plan to align education programs with Alaska's in-demand industries and occupations. Alaska continues to support the use of work-based and applied learning to cultivate student awareness of, and interest in, high-demand industries. The state will continue to expand the use of Registered Apprenticeships and industry led CTE programs.

Alaska's primary focus in responding to employers and job seekers is to maximize the benefits of workforce development, offering services and training to job seekers that lead to employment. Programs such as Registered Apprenticeship and OJT are consummate examples of this dual focus. The most effective are programs that result in portable, industry-recognized credentials.

DOLWD is an active partner in Alaska's Postsecondary Access and Completion Network. The Network is working towards the goal of "65 by 2025" - where 65 percent of Alaskans will have a postsecondary credential or degree by 2025. DOLWD works directly with other Network partners to ensure that Registered Apprenticeship certificates, industry certifications, and occupational endorsements are included in the definition, and corresponding outcome data are collected and reported. DOLWD's Research and Analysis staff regularly provide labor market information updates and ad hoc reports to the Network.

## I. COORDINATING WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

### **Alaska Regional Development Organizations**

According to the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community & Economic Development, Alaska has ten economic development entities called “ARDORs” - Alaska Regional Development Organizations, whose mission is to prepare and implement regional development strategies. Through these strategies, local knowledge, and coordinated implementation, ARDORs champion economic development planning for Alaska’s regions and communities by leveraging baseline support provided by the State of Alaska.

As partners of the state and leaders of regional economic development efforts, ARDORs serve as conduits to a network of economic development programs and support services for their regions, communities, and businesses. Although ARDORs have much in common and implement similar scopes of work, the form and function of each ARDOR is customized to the region. Decisions are made by elected or appointed boards of directors that reflect the economic diversity and character of the region.

### **Regional Economic Development Strategies**

As provided by Alaska Administrative Code (3 AAC 57.090), ARDORs are required to develop and implement regional economic development strategies or similar economic development plans. These strategies or plans are commonly referred to as comprehensive economic development strategies or CEDS, and they satisfy the following requirements:

- Fact-gathering, to assure the region understands the current development situation;
- Identification of potential resources that serve as assets for economic development initiatives;
- Establishment of goals and objectives to guide direction of economic development activities;
- Production of a strategy for regional and local economic development that includes a work plan detailing the methods, resources, responsibilities, and schedules for implementing the strategy; and
- Development of a set of regional and local economic profiles for every community within the region.

### **Work Plans**

Further, each ARDOR develops its own economic development strategies and customized work plan for addressing regional economic development needs. Although each plan includes region-specific goals, objectives, and strategies, they all include the following broad goals:

- Facilitating development of a healthy regional economy that results in sustainable business growth, new business investment, and economic diversification;
- Identifying and working to eliminate regional economic development barriers;
- Developing and implementing a comprehensive economic development strategy;
- Coordinating regional planning efforts that result in new employment and business opportunities;
- Working to enable multiple communities to collaborate and pool limited resources;
- Strengthening partnerships with public, private, and non-government organizations; and

- Providing technical assistance to encourage business startup, retention, and expansion.

The work plans are available on the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community & Economic Development website

at: <https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/dcra/ARDORS/DevelopmentStrategies.aspx>

## Coordination

The AWIB and DOLWD coordinate with the ARDORS in a variety of ways:

- DOLWD staff are in regular contact with the ARDOR program manager to discuss workforce and economic development activities, needs, and opportunities;
- The Commissioner of Commerce, Community and Economic Development is a member of the AWIB, and brings the ARDOR voice to discussions; and
- ARDORS participate in providing public input into the WIOA plan and will continue to provide input to DOLWD on implementation of the plan.

ARDORS also maintain robust partnerships with education, training, and economic development entities within their state-defined region to foster growth in that region. At the core of the ARDOR mission is economic development that retains and creates well-compensated jobs. Once the jobs are available, the task of providing motivated, skilled, and reliable workers tailored for those jobs must also be accomplished. The ARDORS provide communication, collaboration, and knowledge of rural regions of the state to help inform the enhancement of the workforce investment system.

## B. STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS AND POLICIES

Alaska uses multiple management information systems to collect and report data. In PY 2020, Alaska transitioned from a multiple system approach to a Virtual OneStop (VOS) combined management information system that houses WIOA Title IB, II, III, TAA, WOTC, Apprenticeship, and Veterans programs as well as grant solicitation and award management processes. The VOS vendor is Geographic Solutions.

Title IV, Vocational Rehabilitation, uses Aware by Alliance Enterprises for case management and reporting.

### 1. THE STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS THAT WILL SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE'S STRATEGIES. THIS MUST INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF–

**WIOA Title I-B - Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker** currently use the new case management system AlaskaJobs, which allows AJC staff delivering adult and dislocated worker services and subrecipients delivering youth services to maintain comprehensive records documenting interaction with participants. This includes planned and actual services for participants, training and supportive service-related costs, Individual Employment Plans, Individual Service Strategies, referrals to partner agencies, and funding amounts from each of the partner services involved in the participant's service strategy.

**Title II – Alaska's Adult Education (AAE)** also uses AlaskaJobs to collect and report adult education data for National Reporting System (NRS) accountability. It supports program planning and methodology in alignment with WIOA Title II performance reporting requirements, including a robust reporting system that allows for the flexibility to reduce data entry errors quickly, easily, and accurately in AlaskaJobs.

**Title III - Wagner-Peyser** also uses AlaskaJobs, which is not only a job bank but a Virtual AJC system for clients looking for work, job search assistance, training, or career exploration. Registered employers can post jobs, view resumes of qualified candidates, and access a wide range of economic and labor market information. AlaskaJobs provides staff with the online tools

to deliver, track, and report on Wagner-Peyser services for job seekers and employers. Automated interfaces are used to communicate and exchange information between AlaskaJobs and the Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage system to facilitate better delivery of services. AlaskaJobs automatically exchanges information between multiple programs to further enhance services to Alaskans and support the implementation of the state's strategies.

**Title IV - Vocational Rehabilitation** utilizes a management information system called AWARE, which was developed based on Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) business practices and federal requirements. AWARE offers a comprehensive set of case, financial, and organizational modules. The features and procedures in AWARE are consistent and standardized throughout all modules and are designed around the natural flow of the VR case process, making it intuitive for VR counselors.

AWARE VR consists of 17 modules, approximately 300 data pages (screens), more than 350 reports, and a central database with over 330 tables. From AWARE, rehabilitation staff can perform all tasks, and collect and access all data required to perform case management. AWARE software is updated regularly to meet Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) federally mandated reporting requirements and to produce the data file for uploading the quarterly RSA-911 to RSA.

**Electronic Grants Administration and Management System (EGrAMS)** is a web-based system used to issue subawards for both state programs and federal programs, including Apprenticeship, WIOA Youth, Alaska Adult Education, and SCSEP, to organizations and training providers to conduct program activities. The system provides consistent and standard user interfaces to handle the process from grant application entry to closeout and uses a comprehensive security framework for user authentication and authorization. A grants management module for AlaskaJobs is under development; when implemented, the integrated systems will provide greater insight into participant activities relative to program objectives for state and federal reporting.

**Research and Analysis**, a component of the DOLWD Administrative Services Division, has access to databases containing much of the relevant data needed for state and federal reporting, including wage records, student records from the Department of Education & Early Development (DEED) and the University of Alaska (UA), and Permanent Fund Dividend data.

Alaska leverages and supports the understanding of labor market information, particularly as it relates to high-wage, high-demand industries, to the One-Stop operator responsible for determining and negotiating individual training accounts and delivering the majority of WIOA core program services. Labor Market Information staff work with AJC staff, partners, and subrecipients upon request to explain how the state and local economies operate, how to assess occupational employment opportunities at the state and local level, and how to use the tools and information available on the DOLWD Research and Analysis Section's website. In this era of consumer choice, labor market information creates informed consumers who can make better decisions about employment and training options leading personal career development.

The primary vehicle for disseminating workforce information to internal and external customers is the internet. The AJC home page includes "Labor Market Information" as a main link with many other related links, including "Business/Employer Connection" and "Job Seeker Resources." The site is used in all AJC resource rooms and available to anyone with an internet connection, including libraries, schools, work sites, and homes. The DOLWD Research and Analysis Section also produces a monthly magazine, Alaska Economic Trends, which is distributed to businesses and individual subscribers, as well as published on the web.

In addition to the management and exchange of participant services, employer data, and labor market information, a variety of web-based systems that are essential in supporting state workforce development strategies are the Alaska Career Information System, America's Career



InfoNet, America's Service Locator, O\*NET OnLine, Alaska's Labor Exchange System (AlaskaJobs), and America's Job Bank websites.

The **Semi-Autonomous Research Assistant (SARA)** communication system is used by DETS Adult, Dislocated Worker, the Veterans program, and DVR. Now in the final year of a five-year pilot project, SARA is designed to improve the communications between division staff and program participants through the use of text messages and emails, automating tasks such as reminding individuals of appointments, gathering employment information, and collecting post-exit information. The software was designed to meet Alaska's unique needs, and improvements are routinely made based on staff and participant feedback. Anecdotal data suggests that client communication has improved both in clarity and frequency. With automatic appointment reminders now being sent electronically to individuals, there has been an increase in the number of appointments kept, data validation documents received, and follow-up contact responses.

SARA continues to improve the overall employment and training experience. Individuals can use their smartphones to photograph documents for transmission to division staff, reducing the need for them to make a special trip to an office. Additionally, staff can electronically send documents to individuals for review or signature.

Integration of SARA into AlaskaJobs is under development. When complete, SARA will be a key communication tool and expanded to the WIOA Youth program, Adult Education program, and SCSEP.

Core program staff and subrecipients are responsible for the collection of data and subsequent entry into the applicable data systems. The collection of wage data is coordinated with DOLWD's Research and Analysis Section to automate the association of wage data. Strict data-sharing agreements are adhered to when determining access levels and handling of wage data and participant information to ensure compliance with confidentiality agreements and requirements to safeguard Personally Identifiable Information. Wage data are used for reporting on the quarterly and annual reports. These data are also used in reporting pre- and post-training earnings change for various state level reports, including ad hoc reporting.

**Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker** data are collected from program participants in several ways. The Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker programs require a paper application, maintained for data integrity, and the information is then entered into AlaskaJobs by AJC staff or subrecipient staff. Quarterly data validation is conducted to verify the accuracy and completeness of the collected information, and monthly analysis of negotiated metrics and Quarterly Report Analysis metrics is conducted to evaluate current outcomes and trends.

**Wagner-Peyser** participants complete an on-line registration, and subsequent service information is system-generated in AlaskaJobs based on the participant's activity. AJC staff may also manually enter service information.

**Adult Education** individual student data are collected by program staff and entered into AlaskaJobs. The data are used to manage participants, improve programs, and provide required federal reports.

**DVR** participant data are collected through a paper application and one-on-one interviews. Data are also collected outside of the system to validate disability and public support dollars. The AWARE system is used to maintain continuous case information and documentation to meet the goal of successful employment for the participant.

**Senior Community Service Employment Program** participant data are collected by program staff through a paper application and entered into the USDOL SCSEP database. The system provides reports to aid in the monitoring of grantees' and subrecipients' data collection, reporting, and performance. By having all SCSEP grantees and subrecipients use a standardized

database, USDOL can ensure the quality of the information used to assess the effectiveness of the SCSEP program.

The USDOL Employment and Training Administration will be replacing the SPARQ system on July 1, 2022, with the Grantee Performance Management System (GPMS). The system is cloud-based with a web-based platform and a service-oriented architecture. GPMS will be the primary source for entering, tracking, and submitting program participant data that updates into the organization's Quarterly Performance Report data, which will be directly uploaded to the Workforce Integrated Performance System (WIPS).

## 2. THE STATE POLICIES THAT WILL SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE'S STRATEGIES (E.G., CO-ENROLLMENT POLICIES AND UNIVERSAL INTAKE PROCESSES WHERE APPROPRIATE). IN ADDITION, PROVIDE THE STATE'S GUIDELINES FOR STATE-ADMINISTERED ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO A ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM

Alaska's policies support the implementation of the state strategies and ensure compliance with the statutory requirements for each title under WIOA. Policy examples include program-specific Eligibility, Job Center Universal Access, Prioritizing Services to Target Populations, Pre-Apprenticeship, Co-enrollment, and High Concentration of Eligible Youth, which are all in alignment with the state's strategies.

Most of Alaska's policies are cross-divisional between AWIB and DETS, while others are division specific or inclusive of DVR. Additionally, the requirement to adhere to DOLWD policies is passed through to grant subrecipients in subaward agreements.

Alaska's policies are all accessible on DOLWD's public website and have been communicated to AJC staff and subrecipients to ensure full awareness of the policies and methods for compliance. It is important to ensure that policies are reasonable and necessary and provide adequate flexibility while meeting Alaska's strategic goals and vision.

Policy documents for WIOA Adult, Youth, Dislocated Worker, Wagner-Peyser, SCSEP, and Adult Education (AAE) are available here: <https://labor.alaska.gov/dets/policies.htm>.

Policy documents for Vocational Rehabilitation are available here: <https://labor.alaska.gov/dvr/policies/index.html>

Alaska's recently updated One-Stop Operator Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), [https://awib.alaska.gov/forms/PartnerMOU\\_22.pdf](https://awib.alaska.gov/forms/PartnerMOU_22.pdf), is in effect through June 30, 2025, and provides information on the relationship between the Alaska Job Center Network (AJCN) partners, the AWIB, and DETS serving as Alaska's AJCN One-Stop Operator. The MOU includes the roles, responsibilities, and expectations for implementation of the provisions required per section 121 (c) of Title I of WIOA. The link was previously incorrect and has been adjusted to point to the correct document.

The MOU supports cross training to ensure all partners' staff are familiar with all programs represented within the AJCs. All AJCN partners are invited to participate in the AJCN Advisory Council to ensure ongoing communication on service delivery system improvement, training opportunities, new developments with each partner, and identification of web-based or technology driven resources. The MOU establishes joint processes and procedures that enable partners to collaborate in the service delivery system resulting in a seamless and comprehensive array of job matching, education, support services, job training, and other workforce development services.

Section VI. General Provisions, includes detailed information on Partner Impasse Resolutions, Local Dispute Process, Alaska Workforce Investment Board Dispute Resolution Process,

Supplemental Agreements, Effective Dates and Term of the MOU, and Timelines for Modifications and Revisions.

Each partner is responsible for the funding of their direct program services, and resource/cost sharing is outlined in Attachment C of the MOU.

WIOA Policies (<http://labor.alaska.gov/dets/policies.htm>)

<b>WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner Peyser, SCSEP &amp; AWIB Policies</b>	<b>Policy Number</b>
Alaska Adult Education	Assessment and Technical Assistance Manual
Allocating Wagner-Peyser Staff to Job Centers	07-519
Allowable Cost Guidelines	07-520.2
Cash Management	07-504.1
Co-enrollment	07-505.1
Data Integrity	07-541
Eligible Training Provider List	07-501.2
Equal Opportunity Discrimination Complaints Policy	07-506.4
Grant Monitor Corrective Action Plan Timelines	200-2016
High Concentration of Eligible Youth	07-503.3
Incident Report of Fraud, Waste, or Abuse	07-536.1
Job Center Universal Access for Customers with Disabilities	07-516
Military Veteran Priority of Service	07-509.1
Monitoring and Single Audit	07-523.1
Once-Stop Operator Certification	100-2017
Participant Common Exit	07-539
Participant Performance Data Collection	07-508.1
Pre-Award Risk Assessment and Due Diligence	07-527.2
Priority Populations - Adult Program	07-517.1
Program Complaint and Appeal Policy	07-510.2
Property Management	07-511.1
Process for AWIB Endorsement of Industry Workforce Development Plans	100-2016
Quality Pre-Apprenticeship Definition Policy	07-525.1
Registrant Family Income	07-512

<b>WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner Peyser, SCSEP &amp; AWIB Policies</b>	<b>Policy Number</b>
Sanctions for Non-Compliance	07-513.1
Self-Sufficiency	07-514
SCSEP Eligibility Policy	07-540.1
SCSEP; MASST Individual Durational Limits	07-533
SCSEP; MASST Participant Termination	07-535
SCSEP; MASST Wages in Regards to Unemployment Insurance	07-537
Subaward Amendments Policy	07-526.1
Subaward Appeal	07-507.1
Subaward Close-out	07-528.1
Subrecipient Accrual Based Reporting	07-538.1
Supportive Service Limitations for Information Technology Supplies	100-2020
Supportive Services	07-521.1
Time Charging	07-531.1
Tuition and Training Refunds	07-530.1
WIOA Incumbent Worker Training	07-529.2
WIOA Title 1B Dislocated Worker Eligibility	07-524.1
WIOA Title IB Within State Funding Allocations	07-518.1
WIOA Title 1B Youth Program Eligibility	07-502.2
Work Experience	07-515.3
Youth Incentives	07-522.2

Vocational Rehabilitation Policies (<https://labor.alaska.gov/dvr/policies/index.html>)

<b>Vocational Rehabilitation Policy</b>	<b>Policy Number</b>
Co-enrollment	07-505
Ethics	CS 1.0
Confidentiality	CS 2.0
Informed Choice	CS 3.0
Appeals	CS 4.0
Application	CS 5.0
Eligibility	CS 6.0

Trial Work	CS 7.0
Significance of Disabilities	CS 8.0
Financial Participation	CS 9.0
Individualized Plan for Employment	CS 10.0
Vocational Rehabilitation Services	CS 11.0
Supported Employment	CS 12.0
Self-Employment	CS 13.0
Closure	CS 14.0
Post-Employment	CS 15.0
Transition Services and Pre-Employment Transition Services	CS 16.0
Order of Selection	CS 17.0

### 3. STATE PROGRAM AND STATE BOARD OVERVIEW

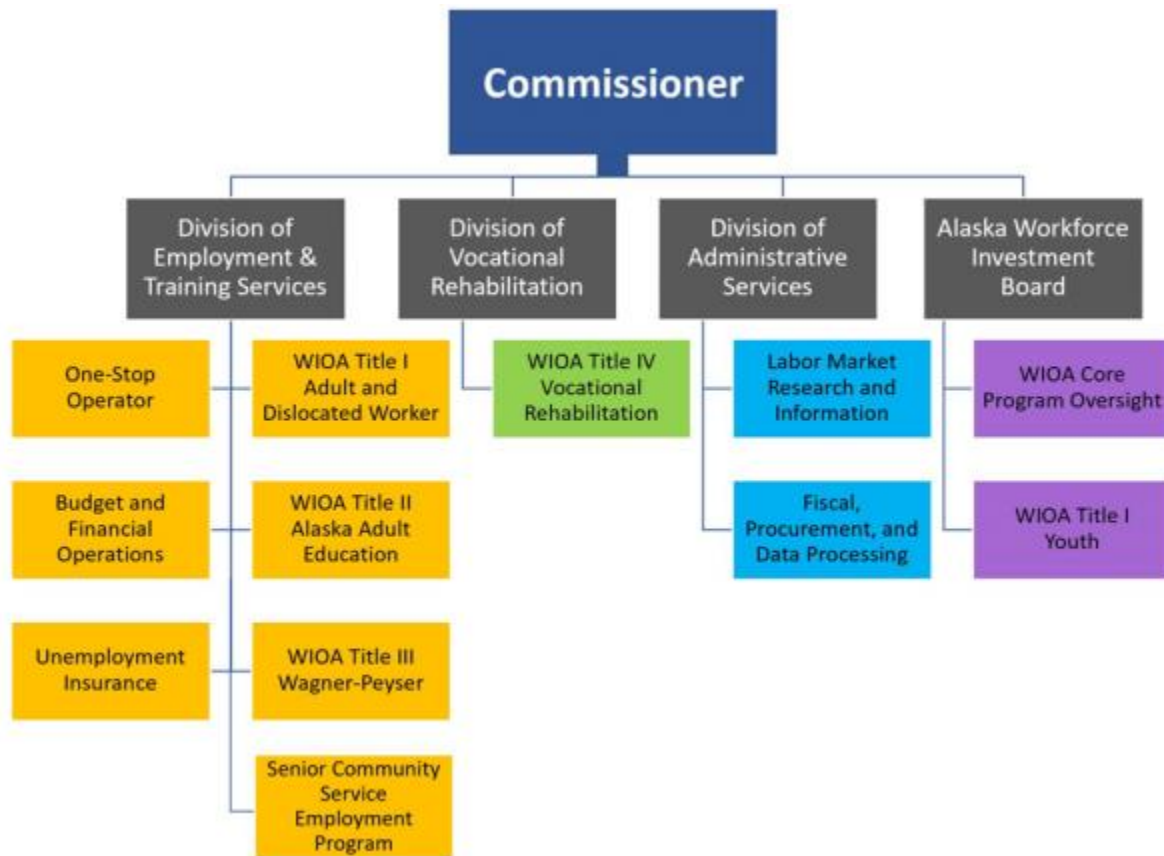
#### A. STATE AGENCY ORGANIZATION

All WIOA core programs and SCSEP are housed within the Alaska DOLWD. WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker (WIOA Title I–B), AAE (WIOA Title II), Wagner–Peyser (WIOA Title III), and the SCSEP program are administered by the Division of Employment and Training Services (DETS). The Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) administers WIOA Title I–B, Youth. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) administers WIOA Title IV, Vocational Rehabilitation.

The AWIB provides oversight for the WIOA core programs and several state employment and training programs including STEP, the Alaska Construction Academies, and the Technical Vocational Educational Program, with administrative support provided by the Division of Employment and Training Services.

DETS administers the Trade Act and Work Opportunity Tax Credit programs and operates the Alaska Job Centers (AJCs), a proud partner of the American Job Center Network, with 14 AJCs across the state. AJC staff provide Wagner–Peyser and Title I–B career services, Title I–B Adult and Dislocated Worker Individual Training Accounts and training-related supportive services, STEP training and supportive services, SCSEP, and services to employers through the AJC business connection staff. Figure 15 shows the organization of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development divisions and units working on WIOA.

#### **Figure 15: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development WIOA Organizational Chart**



Under WIOA in Alaska, face-to-face personal services are the foundation of the service delivery system through the 14 AJCs across the state. Wagner-Peyser and Title I B programs are represented in all AJCs. AAE (Title II) is allocated to statewide grantees, and a standard referral mechanism between the AJCs to the grantees has been established. Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation is co-located in several of the AJCs across the state. In AJCs that are not co-located with an on-site Vocational Rehabilitation office, the standard referral method is used.

AJC staff identify the specific needs of each client by conducting an initial assessment to determine individual skill, aptitude, and ability levels, and the need for supportive services. This supports our “no wrong door” approach to services, eliminates duplication of effort, and promotes access to the appropriate service type for the client’s needs (basic, individualized, and training). This structure enhances rapid identification of need and enrollment into a funded training or education plan, receipt of a credential, or access to other services under the WIOA programs. AJC staff will provide a menu of “career services” to clients who are job ready. For clients who need additional training, education, credentials, or other services, the AJCs act as an access point in the referral and/or enrollment process and help coordinate the introduction to other programs and services. The AJCs have built strong partnerships in their communities, emphasizing seamless service delivery to clients.

Training and education align with the state’s economic and workforce needs as identified by the AWIB. WIOA core program services are delivered in-person or itinerantly through the AJCs or electronically at the client’s convenience.

Upon entering an AJC, each client is assessed to determine how individual needs can best be met. This initial assessment includes self-identification of veteran and other eligible person status to ensure receipt of Priority of Service (POS). Any client who identifies as a veteran will also be assessed for eligibility and assistance through the Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG). Customers seeking services and assistance through AlaskaJobs are also assessed for POS and JVSG eligibility. Additionally, JVSG-funded staff members are in areas of the state that have the

largest veteran populations. All local areas without on-site JVSG-funded staff are served itinerantly or electronically.

WIOA core program staff co-enroll eligible participants to leverage resources and funding. Co-enrollment ensures access to a wide array of comprehensive, vitally important services like in-depth assessments, interest inventories, reviews of transferable skills, vocational training, and services such as childcare, local transportation and additional partner services to overcome barriers to employment. These partnerships generate positive outcomes resulting in meaningful, sustainable employment. Customers can also participate in self-service activities through AlaskaJobs including job search, labor market information, and orientation to AJC services. Customers who view our public website or who are enrolled in AlaskaJobs periodically receive updated information about job trends and opportunities, training academies, and upcoming career fairs throughout the state.

## B. STATE BOARD

The AWIB is authorized by Alaska statute and comprised of members appointed by the governor. Several of the governor's cabinet members are seated on the AWIB, including the Lieutenant Governor, the Commissioners of Labor and Workforce Development, Health & Social Services, Education & Early Development, and Commerce, Community & Economic Development. Board membership also includes a representative from the University of Alaska system and representatives from postsecondary vocational education, secondary vocational education, Alaska Adult Education, and public education. Four members of the board represent business and industry, and four represent organized labor. Additional board members include one who has professional experience with individuals with developmental disabilities, a member who is a veteran, a member from an organization representing the employment and training needs of Alaska Natives, and additional members from the private sector. In addition, two chief local elected officials have been appointed to the board to ensure local input for our Alternate Entity State Board.

Alaska Workforce Investment Board:  
3301 Eagle Street, Ste. 305 Anchorage, Alaska 99508  
(907) 269-7485, (907) 269-7489 fax, (888) 412-4742 toll free

## I. MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

A complete member roster is shown in Figure 16 and is also available on the AWIB website [https://awib.alaska.gov/AWIB\\_roster.pdf](https://awib.alaska.gov/AWIB_roster.pdf).

**Figure 16: Alaska Alternate Entity Workforce Board Roster**



ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
& WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Alaska Workforce Investment Board					
Name	Term End	Organization	Address	Phone	Fax
Meyer, Kevin Lt. Governor	Appointed	State of Alaska <a href="mailto:kevin.meyer@alaska.gov">kevin.meyer@alaska.gov</a>	P.O. Box 110015 Juneau, AK 99811	465-3320 269-7460	465-3400 269-0263
Vacant Lt. Governor Designee	Appointed	State of Alaska Vacant	P.O. Box 110001 Juneau, AK 99811	465-3500 N/A	
Ledbetter, Tamika DOLWD Commissioner	Appointed	State of Alaska <a href="mailto:tamika.ledbetter@alaska.gov">tamika.ledbetter@alaska.gov</a>	550 West 7th Avenue, Suite 1930 Anchorage, AK 99501	465-2700 N/A	465-2784
Mayer, Duane DOLWD Commissioner Designee	Appointed	State of Alaska <a href="mailto:duane.mayer@alaska.gov">duane.mayer@alaska.gov</a>	3301 Eagle St. Ste. 302 Anchorage, AK 99501	334-5963 N/A	
Johnson, Michael DEED Commissioner	Appointed	State of Alaska <a href="mailto:deed.commissioner@alaska.gov">deed.commissioner@alaska.gov</a>	P.O. Box 110500 Juneau, AK 99811	465-2800 N/A	465-3452
Riddle, Deborah DEED Commissioner Designee	Appointed	State of Alaska <a href="mailto:deborah.riddle@alaska.gov">deborah.riddle@alaska.gov</a>	P.O. Box 110500 Juneau, AK 99811	465-2892 N/A	465-4156
Crum, Adam DHSS Commissioner	Appointed	State of Alaska <a href="mailto:adam.crum@alaska.gov">adam.crum@alaska.gov</a>	P.O. Box 240249 Anchorage, AK 99524	269-6680 N/A	
Marsigian, Christine DHSS Commissioner Designee	Appointed	State of Alaska <a href="mailto:christine.marsigian@alaska.gov">christine.marsigian@alaska.gov</a>	3601 C Street Ste. 902 Anchorage, AK 99503	334-2474 N/A	
Sande, Julie DCCED Commissioner	Appointed	State of Alaska <a href="mailto:julie.sande@alaska.gov">julie.sande@alaska.gov</a>	P.O. Box 110800 Juneau, AK 99811	465-2500 N/A	
Chambers, Sara DCCED Commissioner Designee	Appointed	State of Alaska <a href="mailto:sara.chambers@alaska.gov">sara.chambers@alaska.gov</a>	333 Willoughby Ave Juneau, AK 99801	465-2144 N/A	
Vacant University of Alaska Rep.	Vacant	Vacant	Vacant	Vacant	Vacant
Head, Karla Postsecondary Voc. Education	12/1/2025	Alaska Technical Center, Kotzebue <a href="mailto:khead@nwarcslc.org">khead@nwarcslc.org</a>	P.O. Box 571 Kotzebue, AK 99752	484-3365 442-1501	
Vacant Sac Voc. Ed	Vacant	Vacant	Vacant	Vacant	Vacant
Zugg, Patricia Public Education	12/1/2024	Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District <a href="mailto:trish.zugg@matnusk12.us">trish.zugg@matnusk12.us</a>	501 N Gulkana St Palmer, AK 99645	250-1926 746-9238	
Smith, Malyn Adult Basic Education	10/13/2023	Alaska Job Corps Center <a href="mailto:smith.malyn@jobcorps.org">smith.malyn@jobcorps.org</a>	800 E. Lynn Martin Drive Palmer, AK 99645	N/A 861-8801 W	
Nielsen-Bryant, Alison Prof. Dev. Disabilities	12/1/2024	<a href="mailto:raasnielsen@hotmail.com">raasnielsen@hotmail.com</a>		441-7747 N/A	
Delia, Tony Native E/T Org	12/1/2023	Tony Delia Enterprise LLC <a href="mailto:delia.tony@tyschoo.com">delia.tony@tyschoo.com</a>	6843 O'Brien Street Unit B Anchorage, AK 99507	978-3425 N/A	
Pacarro, Brenda Business/Industry	12/1/2025	Callista Corporation <a href="mailto:bpacarro@callistacorp.com">bpacarro@callistacorp.com</a>	3111 C Street Ste. 500 Anchorage, AK 99503	802-0608 C 275-2818 W	
Bell, Larry Business/Industry	12/1/2025	Nat. Electrical Contractors Assn. NECA <a href="mailto:larry@alaskaneca.org">larry@alaskaneca.org</a>	712 West 36th Avenue Anchorage, AK 99503	561-1958 244-4166	
Sands, Lucille Business/Industry	10/13/2024	Bering Straits Native Corporation <a href="mailto:julie.sands@bnsn.org">julie.sands@bnsn.org</a>	10641 Concord Hill Circle Anchorage, AK 99515	406-0433 N/A	
Selle, Mari Business/Industry	10/13/2024	Alaska Primary Care Assn <a href="mailto:MarieS@alaskapca.org">MarieS@alaskapca.org</a>	3111 C Street Ste. 500 Anchorage, AK 99503	301-2580 C 786-4595 W	
Frank, Peter Private Sector	10/13/2024	Bore Tide Construction <a href="mailto:peter@boretideconstruction.com">peter@boretideconstruction.com</a>	1740 Ternlou Ct. Palmer, AK 99645	N/A 841-2169 W	
Rose, Patrick Private Sector	10/13/2023	Northern Industrial Training LLC <a href="mailto:patrick.rose@nitataska.com">patrick.rose@nitataska.com</a>	3201 C Street Ste. 308 Anchorage, AK 99503	317-4100 C 743-7704 W	
Vacant Veteran	Vacant	Vacant	Vacant	Vacant	Vacant
Trivette, Marcus Private Sector	10/13/2023	Brice, Inc. <a href="mailto:marcust@briceinc.com">marcust@briceinc.com</a>	P.O. Box 61202 Fairbanks, AK 99706	452-2512 978-2924	
Jackson, Sharon Private Sector	10/13/2024	Alaska Rising LLC <a href="mailto:shakas22@gmail.com">shakas22@gmail.com</a>	12703 Iris Way Eagle River, AK 99577	854-1469 N/A	
Eichholtz, Scott Organized Labor	10/13/2024	Laborer's Local 942 <a href="mailto:seichholtz@local942.net">seichholtz@local942.net</a>	2740 Davis Road Fairbanks, AK 99709	322-7268 N/A	
Baxter, Corey Organized Labor	10/13/2024	International Union of Operating Engineers 302 <a href="mailto:cbaxter@iuo302.org">cbaxter@iuo302.org</a>	9309 Glacier Hwy Bldg. A, Ste 105 Juneau, AK 99801	586-2950 321-4271	
Andrew, Ryan Organized Labor	10/13/2022	IBEW Local 1547 <a href="mailto:randrew@ibew1547.org">randrew@ibew1547.org</a>	3333 Denali Street Ste. 200 Anchorage, AK 99503	777-7252 440-6099	
Ladd, Anthony Organized Labor	10/13/2022	Ironworkers Local 751 <a href="mailto:anthony.ladd-iw751@ironworkers.org">anthony.ladd-iw751@ironworkers.org</a>	8141 Schoon Street Anchorage, AK 99518	590-9539 C N/A	
Vacant Non-Voting Local Elected Official	Vacant	Vacant	Vacant	Vacant	Vacant
Vacant Non-Voting Local Elected Official	Vacant	Vacant	Vacant	Vacant	Vacant

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As of 5/18/2022

## II. BOARD ACTIVITIES

The AWIB meets three times annually either virtually or as a full board with each in person meeting held in a different region of the state. The statewide board meetings serve as an opportunity to engage with regional stakeholders and sector partners. In statewide board



meetings, members adopt resolutions or motions designed to provide policy guidance, program oversight, and improvements to Alaska's workforce system. Between the three statewide board meetings, members of the AWIB serve on or more of the following standing committees: Workforce Readiness & Employment Placement; Policy & Planning; Assessment & Evaluation; Legislative; and the Executive Committee. Committees meet bimonthly, except for the Executive Committee, which meets monthly, and the Legislative Committee, which meets at the call of the Chair. Through the committee structure, AWIB members engage in examining the workforce system to identify areas for improvement, build sector partnerships, develop sector strategies, evaluate policies and programs, research and recommend legislative initiatives, and identify areas of improvement in services for Alaska's adults and youth who experience barriers to employment.

#### 4. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS AND ONE-STOP PROGRAM PARTNERS

##### A. ASSESSMENT OF CORE PROGRAMS

One way to measure effectiveness is to analyze numbers and percentages of participants going to work. Alaska has the unique ability to match employment and wage records using the Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD) database. The state has a history of working with partners such as the Department of Education & Early Development (DEED), the University of Alaska (UA), and sub-recipients to provide participant information, within the confines of privacy, which allows effective analyses.

Alaska is committed to the use of performance data to evaluate programs and partners. Alaska utilizes the joint performance measures found in Section 116 of WIOA to measure and evaluate program effectiveness, to help improve program evaluations, and to remove potential barriers to integration of services. These joint performance measures promote consistency by creating common definitions of success.

The system is monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis using the reports required for federal and state reporting as well as ad-hoc reports generated from the databases used to capture service delivery data. Leadership and program staff review these reports and communicate with core program operators and partners to provide technical assistance on areas needing improvement and to obtain information on best practices to share.

Performance levels for Titles I and III are established through a negotiation process with the Employment and Training Administration (ETA). A state team representing the core programs reviews actual performance outcomes and determines proposed levels for each core program in those Titles. This team is responsible for coordinating with ETA to negotiate and report statewide performance levels as required by WIOA.

All core programs are responsible for establishing a system for collecting, reviewing, and evaluating performance required by WIOA. Each core program is responsible for compiling and submitting performance data for that program. If needed, each core program establishes and implements performance improvement plans based on the evaluation of performance data.

Monitoring and assessments related to programs and activities authorized by WIOA are on-going activities, which allow the AWIB to identify how effectively the state's programs are achieving the vision and goals of the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor and of DOLWD. The results provide the basis for making statewide and regional judgments regarding the effectiveness of the WIOA programs administered within Alaska's workforce development system.

All performance data required by Section 116 of WIOA are collected from each core program and compiled into a combined report as required.

Title II requires the State Alaska Adult Education (AAE) office to monitor and evaluate the quality of, and the improvement in, adult education and literacy activities. AAE programs will be monitored with a formal monitoring document on a predetermined schedule. Routine auditing will be done through onsite visits and reviews, pre-award risk analysis, desk monitor and file reviews of student records, program desk monitoring tools, and negotiated performance indicators of program data to assess progress in meeting the performance accountability measures based on indicators in Section 116. Programs not meeting the negotiated levels receive increased technical assistance. AAE reports are submitted to the federal office annually. The Alaska Adult Education office negotiates performance indicators with the US Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE).

The overall strategy to improve core programs, grant administration, on-site monitoring, and assessment of programs is a crucial element for DOLWD's delivery of service and ensures that limited dollars are spent well. Alaska's assessment of programs is based on the delivery of high-quality, outcome-focused job seeker and business services. Alaska's workforce development system is demand-driven and fully integrated, and links employers to job seekers to promote the success of workers and businesses. Alaska uses the USDOL Core Monitoring Guide to ensure that oversight and monitoring practices reinforce USDOL principles while ensuring program outcomes are achieved and a high level of integrity is maintained. The guide provides a consistent framework and starting point for all on-site grant-monitoring responsibilities. The assessment will include the quality, effectiveness, and improvement of programs broken down by local area or provider.

#### B. ASSESSMENT OF ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS

The assessment of One-Stop delivery system partner program services is based on participant outcomes identified under their statutorily required performance and reporting requirements. However, the WIOA joint performance measures, which consist of six customer outcomes specific to core indicators of performance and employer satisfaction, demonstrate value in promoting integration of services and boosting accessibility and transparency within the workforce system. Therefore, if possible, the same measures and methodologies are applied to other One-Stop partner programs that are applied to the core programs, in addition to any program-specific measures required by federal or state regulations.

Regardless of whether a program is a core program or a partner program, or whether a measure is required by WIOA or partner program law and regulation, performance measures and performance evaluations will be applied at the customer level first and then may be aggregated by program or population.

#### C. PREVIOUS ASSESSMENT RESULTS

The AWIB monitors Alaska Job Center Network Sites on a rotational schedule to ensure that each site is thoroughly reviewed and provided access to immediate feedback and technical assistance. The programs monitored are WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, Dislocated Worker Training-National Emergency Grant, and Sector Partnership-National Emergency Grant funds.

The AWIB began monitoring Apprenticeship grantees in 2017. The Division of Employment and Training Services works closely with the AWIB to provide technical assistance with monitoring activities.

One-stop sites are the portals to our state's workforce system and its broad array of career services and resources designed to help individuals acquire the skills necessary to gain meaningful employment and help our businesses to access the talent pipeline that meets their human capital needs and fuels economic growth. Workforce system partners are required to collaborate to support a seamless customer-focused service delivery network. Every region across our state is unique in terms of its economy and geography, but each is actively working to create a system that provides effective services for our job seeker and business customers.

The Alaska Job Center Network Sites (One-Stop) are evaluated and certified no less than once every three years. Working within pandemic constraints, the AWIB certified the following One Stop sites since 2019:

- May 23, 2019 – Valdez and Homer
- October 23, 2019 – Nome and Kodiak
- June 24, 2021 – Mat-Su Job Center

The monitors are conducted in accordance with WIOA Proposed Rules, Federal Register Vol. 80, No 73, Subpart D, Sections 683.440; 2 CFR 200 and the DOLWD/DETS Monitoring and Single Audit policy 07-523.2. Financial management and program activities are reviewed. The financial reviews include an evaluation of participant expenditure and associated financial documentation, policies, procedures, and staff interviews. The program reviews include an evaluation of program activities and services provided to eligible participants, staff interviews, and the examination of randomly selected participant files. The participant files are reviewed for inclusion of required forms and data, case notes to ensure continuity from program enrollment through exit and follow-up, and data entry practices into the case management system. Additionally, program performance information is compared to the State's federal negotiated performance rates.

Under WIOA, state and local partners share common performance goals and are mandated to collaborate in developing and implementing a one-stop delivery system where services are designed with the customer in the center, resources are leveraged for maximum efficiency, and continuous improvement is the hallmark.

To assure WIOA goals are met, the One-stop certification teams are comprised of AWIB members and staff and individuals who represent local partners with specific expertise serving populations with barriers. Results and outcomes for the public investment in the One Stop Operators are essential to the Alaska Job Center Network's relevance. The effectiveness of the AJCN for employers and job seekers is evident in system performance, and service delivery decisions are based on data. On an ongoing basis, customer data from one-stop partners and regional economic data is collected, analyzed, and shared with all workforce system staff, community stakeholders and WIOA partner representatives. Plans for improvement, enhancement, or adjustment are established and acted upon. The DOLWD and AWIB work closely together assure WIOA requirements are met.

#### D. EVALUATION

##### **Evaluation Projects and Products**

With a portion of statewide funds set aside by the Governor, DETS along with the AWIB Assessment & Evaluation committee, partner with the department's Research and Analysis unit, other Labor divisions, national, state and local agencies, trade unions and organizations, training providers, and other non-profit and private entities around the state to evaluate WIOA program performance via a variety of products and projects. The Research and Analysis unit collects national, state, and local data in addition to working with WIOA program leaders and partners to conduct and publish longitudinal studies regarding Alaska's demography and economy as they relate to the workforce, to ensure that the state is on a continuous path of improvement and excellence in providing targeted training and support to the state's employers and job seekers.

R & A's Occupational Database and other proprietary information systems providing participant data and rich labor market information create a platform for deep, long-term evaluation of workforce programs. Examples include worker residency analysis, new hires/hiring patterns analysis, the Training Program Performance Report, COVID-19 impact analysis, gender wage

gap analysis, unemployment insurance claimant analysis, and labor market analysis for other special topics.

### **Quality Pre-Apprenticeship**

During PY 2018, training provider Alaska Works Partnership worked with the Federal Office of Apprenticeship, the state's apprenticeship program, the DETS TET DWG program, and construction trade unions and employers to develop the state's first seven construction Quality Pre-Apprenticeship (QPA) framework courses, per policy 07.525.1. After federal approval, training delivery began in PY 2019, with five more constructions QPAs under development in PY 2020. During PY 2020, DETS laid groundwork to evaluate the effectiveness of QPA training as more participants complete the courses and gain indenture or employment. During PY 2021 through 2023, DETS will combine forces with AWP and Research and Analysis, and consult with state and federal offices, apprenticeship providers, employers, and participants to gauge satisfaction with the QPA framework, as well as compare the rate of apprentice registration, employment, and wage outcomes of QPA completers with other types of construction training from providers across the state including programs leading to NCCER credentials. The results of this study will inform further development and use of the QPA framework in construction and other trades in Alaska.

### **Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment**

Alaska initiated Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) evaluation according to the requirements of TEGL 06-19 to conduct evidence-based analysis to determine and deploy optimal interventions and service delivery during PY 2020. The DETS RESEA Coordinator worked with the division's Unemployment Insurance office and with the Research and Analysis unit as the third-party evaluator to establish elements for evaluation including:

- The number of benefit weeks claimed by RESEA claimants compared to non-RESEA claimants
- The amount of dollars spent against the UI Trust Fund claimed by RESEA claimants compared to non-RESEA claimants
- Employment rate in the second quarter after completing participation requirements
- Employment Retention in the fourth quarter after completing participation requirements

RESEA evaluation will continue through PY 2021 and beyond.

## **5. DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS FOR CORE PROGRAMS**

### **A. FOR TITLE I PROGRAMS**

#### **I. YOUTH ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 128(B)(2) OR (B)(3)**

Alaska has been approved by the US DOL Employment and Training Administration as a Single State Local Area due to the unique labor market and geographic workforce distribution. The DOLWD allocates funds to six regional economic and workforce areas: Anchorage/Mat-Su, Gulf Coast, Interior, Northern, Southeast, and Southwest.

Alaska's WIOA Title IB Within State Funding Allocation Policy 07-518.2 describes the methodology used to allocate Youth funds among the six regional economic and workforce areas.

For the state level distribution of funds, five percent for statewide administration and 10 percent for statewide projects are reserved annually. The remaining Youth funds are distributed primarily through competitive grants as required by 20 CFR § 681.400 Subpart C. However, as

much as is practicable, from the total to be distributed between economic regions: 1) One third is allocated on the basis of the relative number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment (census areas with an unemployment rate of 6.5 percent or higher) in each economic region compared to the total number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment statewide; 2) One third is allocated on the basis of the relative excess number of unemployed individuals (census areas with an unemployment rate of 4.5 percent or higher) in each economic region compared to the total excess number of unemployed individuals statewide; and 3) One third is allocated on the basis of the relative number of disadvantaged youth in each economic region compared to the total number of disadvantaged youth statewide.

## II. ADULT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) OR (B)(3)

Alaska has been approved by the US DOL Employment and Training Administration as a Single State Local Area due to the unique labor market and geographic workforce distribution. The DOLWD allocates funds to six regional economic and workforce areas: Anchorage/Mat-Su, Gulf Coast, Interior, Northern, Southeast, and Southwest.

The WIOA Title IB Within State Funding Allocation Policy 07-518.1 describes the methodology used in allocating funds for Adult employment and training activities among the six regional economic and local workforce areas in the state.

For the state level distribution of funds, five percent of the Adult federal allotment for statewide administration and 10 percent for statewide projects is reserved annually.

From the balance, the DETS Director or designee will determine the amount or percent of funding to be distributed to the economic regions. The most recent labor market, employment, and unemployment data available from the DOLWD, Research and Analysis Section will be used to determine the allocation.

As much as is practicable, from the amount to be distributed between economic regions: 1) One fourth is allocated on the basis of the relative number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment (census areas with an unemployment rate of 6.5 percent or higher) in each economic region compared to the total number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment statewide; 2) One fourth is allocated on the basis of the relative excess number of unemployed individuals in each economic region compared to the total excess number of unemployed individuals statewide; 3) One fourth is allocated on the basis of the relative number of disadvantaged adults in each economic region compared to the total number of disadvantaged adults statewide; and 4) One fourth is allocated on the basis of the relative number of employed individuals in each economic region compared to the total number of employed individuals statewide.

Adult program allocations are distributed through the job centers for Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) and Supportive Services. The DETS Director or designee may reallocate Adult funds between the economic regions to make effective and efficient use of the funds while taking into consideration statewide needs. The transfer of up to 100 percent of funds between the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs is allowed with approval from the DETS Director or designee and supported by the Alaska Workforce Investment Board through resolution 16-06.

## III. DISLOCATED WORKER EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) AND BASED ON DATA AND WEIGHTS ASSIGNED

Alaska has been approved by the US DOL Employment and Training Administration as a Single State Local Area due to the unique labor market and geographic workforce distribution. The DOLWD allocates funds to six regional economic and workforce areas: Anchorage/Mat-Su, Gulf Coast, Interior, Northern, Southeast, and Southwest.

The WIOA Title IB Within State Funding Allocation Policy 07-518.1 describes the methodology used in allocating funds for Dislocated Worker employment and training activities among the six regional economic and local workforce areas in the state.

For the state level distribution of funds, the DOLWD will: 1) Reserve five percent of Alaska's Dislocated Worker federal allotments for statewide administration; 2) Reserve 10 percent of Alaska's Dislocated Worker federal allotments for statewide projects; 3) Reserve up to 25 percent of the Dislocated Worker federal allotment for Rapid Response activities.

From the balance, the DETS Director or designee will determine the amount or percent of funding to be distributed to the economic regions. The most recent labor market, employment, and unemployment data available from the DOLWD, Research and Analysis Section will be used to determine the allocation.

For the Dislocated Worker program, as much as is practicable, from the total to be distributed between economic regions: 1) One fourth is allocated on the basis of the relative number of insured unemployed individuals in each economic region compared to the total number of insured unemployed individuals statewide; 2) One fourth is allocated on the basis of the relative concentrations of unemployed individuals (census areas with an unemployment rate of 6.5 percent or higher) in each economic region compared to the total concentrations of unemployed individuals statewide; 3) One fourth is allocated on the basis of the relative number of long-term unemployed (15 weeks or more) individuals in each economic region compared to the total number of long-term unemployed individuals statewide; and 4) One fourth is allocated on the basis of the relative number of employed individuals in each economic region compared to the total number of employed individuals statewide.

Dislocated Worker allocations will be distributed through the job centers for Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) and Supportive Services. The DETS Director or designee may reallocate Dislocated Worker funds between the economic regions to make effective and efficient use of the funds while taking into consideration statewide needs. The transfer of up to 100 percent of funds between the Dislocated Worker and Adult programs is allowed with approval from the DETS Director or designee and supported by the Alaska Workforce Investment Board through resolution 16-06.

## **B. FOR TITLE II**

### **I. DESCRIBE HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL AWARD MULTI-YEAR GRANTS OR CONTRACTS ON A COMPETITIVE BASIS TO ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS IN THE STATE, INCLUDING HOW ELIGIBLE AGENCIES WILL ESTABLISH THAT ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS ARE ORGANIZATIONS OF DEMONSTRATED EFFECTIVENESS**

Title II funds will be awarded as multi-year Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) grants to eligible providers of adult education. Alaska Adult Education (AAE) has geographic regional economic programs funded by AEFLA grant monies. Each grant serves as the main delivery system of AAE throughout Alaska but there is a separate competition for each region. Two additional grants are awarded under a statewide competition for Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education and AAE services to be offered in the Department of Corrections (DOC) correctional centers.

The AAE program funds regional economic programs through a formula that specifies a base budget allocation of \$50,000; a cost of living adjustment, based on the Alaska Department of Education's Area Cost Factor Differentials, used for the state's distribution to public school districts; an adjustment for the number of adults in each region over the age of 18 who do not have a high school diploma, as calculated from American Community Survey data; program performance during previous grant cycle; and maintenance of compliance with programmatic, state and federal policies and regulations. The AAE economic regions follow the same regions

established by the Alaska Native Regional Corporations. Alaska is not divided into counties or parishes, as is the case in other states, but is divided into Alaska Native Regional Corporations.

The amount of funding to provide services under the DOC grant is determined by the law (section 222. (a)(1)), which states no more than 20 percent of the 82.5 percent of federal funds used to award subgrants will be awarded for correctional education and other institutionalized individuals. The funding formula for Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education grants are determined and designated by federal award each year.

Alaska issues one Request for Grant Application (RGA) for all the above-named grants. Grant publications are made available to a broad range of potential applications through expansion of outreach, including public notice of availability of funds for Title II published on the State of Alaska Public On-line Notice System. The AAE office uses traditional and non-traditional publications, such as websites and social media, to inform current and potential eligible providers of the process. As established in the RGA, informational teleconferences are scheduled to provide technical assistance and answer questions on the grant application in an open forum. Frequently asked questions are compiled and posted on the AAE website.

The RGA is attached as a PDF to the online announcement, ensuring that all potential eligible providers have access to the same application. The rubric to score the applications is included. An announcement that the RGA is being published on the State of Alaska Public On-line Notice System is emailed to eligible providers that have signed up for notifications of grant releases from the Online-Notice System. Eligible providers, for the purposes of the RGA, are defined in Title II Section 203 (5). Organizations not previously funded are given fair and equitable opportunity to apply for funding without hindrance.

An eligible provider must demonstrate past effectiveness by providing performance data on its record of improving the skills of eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy, in the content domains of reading, writing, mathematics, English language acquisition, and GED attainment. An eligible provider must also provide information regarding its outcomes for participants related to employment, attainment of secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and transition to postsecondary education and training. Grant applicants must demonstrate effectiveness separate from the grant narrative.

There are two ways in which an eligible provider may meet the requirements:

(1) An eligible provider that has been funded under Title II of the Act must provide performance data required under section 116 to demonstrate past effectiveness.

(2) An eligible provider that has not been previously funded under Title II of the Act must provide performance data to demonstrate its past effectiveness in serving basic skills deficient eligible individuals, including evidence of its success in achieving outcomes listed in the paragraph above.

Demonstrated effectiveness requires eligible applicants to submit the two most recent years' data illustrating success in improving the skills of eligible individuals and outcomes for participants utilizing the data outlined above.

Each application will be reviewed to determine whether it meets the standard of demonstrated effectiveness. Applications that do not provide sufficient evidence of demonstrated effectiveness will be eliminated from the competition and will not proceed to the committee review.

**II. DESCRIBE HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL ENSURE DIRECT AND EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ALL ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS TO APPLY AND COMPETE FOR FUNDS AND HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL ENSURE THAT IT IS USING THE SAME GRANT OR CONTRACT ANNOUNCEMENT AND APPLICATION PROCEDURE FOR ALL ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS**

The Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) announces the availability of funds for Title II Alaska Adult Education (AAE) through the State of Alaska Public On-line Notice System as well as through traditional and non-traditional publications, such as websites, press releases, and social media to inform current and potential eligible providers of the grant release. A copy of the Request for Grant Application (RGA), scoring rubric, and AAE specific definitions are attached to the online announcement. The announcement and the RGA both reference WIOA Title II's definition of "eligible provider." Any entity that has signed up for access to the DOLWD On-line Notice System receives notice regarding the RGA. During the initial period of the grant submission process, any eligible agency that contacts DOLWD with an interest in participating is told how to access the On-line Notice System if they have not yet accessed it. As established in the RGA, informational teleconferences are scheduled to provide technical assistance and answer questions on the grant application in an open forum. Frequently asked questions are compiled and posted on the AAE website.

The RGA outlines criterion to be provided in a clear and concise narrative that is aligned with the WIOA 13 considerations. Furthermore, through the RGA process, eligible providers must demonstrate past effectiveness in serving eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy. Providers who are previously funded Alaska Adult Education grantees will be required to show data to demonstrate the average percentage of students who show an increase in achieving a least one educational functional level (EFL); earning an alternative high school diploma through GED testing; and achieving gains in WIOA outcomes measures. An eligible provider that has not been previously funded under Title II of WIOA may demonstrate effectiveness by providing performance data related to record of recruitment, retention, instructional practices, workforce alignment, and improving the skills of eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy, in the content domains of reading, writing, mathematics, English language acquisition, and other subject areas relevant to the services contained in the Alaska Adult Education application for funds. They will also be required to provide data in relation to the average percentage of students achieving at least one grade level advancement; high school completion; and employment transition outcomes.

The same announcement, application, and process are used for all applicants for each RGA issued by the AAE office. The AAE office conducts the grant application process and ensures that the same review process is used for all applications received. The AAE grant recipients are directly funded from the state DOLWD.

### C. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

The DVR is a combined agency; therefore, this is not applicable.

## 6. PROGRAM DATA

### A. DATA ALIGNMENT AND INTEGRATION

Effective July 1, 2020, Alaska implemented Virtual OneStop (VOS) System, AlaskaJobs, to replace the WIOA Title IB, II, III, and Trade Adjustment Assistance systems; the Work Opportunity Tax Credit system; and Electronic Grants Management System. This new, robust system interfaces with Alaska's Unemployment Insurance system to offer a common front door for employers, training providers, UI customers, job seekers, and workers. Additionally, AlaskaJobs allow delivery of streamlined services to customers, prevents duplication of data entry, leverages program resources, and ensures complete and accurate common PIRL reporting. Through AlaskaJobs, the core programs continue to share and combine participant information for PIRL reporting, performance evaluations, and statistical purposes as has been done since the implementation of WIOA.

The DOLWD's Research and Analysis section has coordinated for years with the Department of Education and Early Development, the University of Alaska, and other regional training providers to share data. Additionally, for program performance measures based on employment



and wages, Research and Analysis has access to integrated databases to determine, among other measures, program participants' employment status, wages, and continued residency in the state. These relationships with state agencies and training providers support the sharing and integration of data.

With the implementation of VOS, Alaska possesses a fully integrated intake and data system except for the Title IV, Vocational Rehabilitation AWARE system. AWARE was developed based on Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) business practices and federal requirements. AWARE offers a comprehensive set of cases, financial, and organizational modules designed around the natural flow of the VR case process, making it intuitive for VR Counselors. The VOS system and AWARE system will integrate through the sharing of information collected by a Semi-Autonomous Research Assistant (SARA). SARA is designed to improve and share communication between division staff and program participants using text messages and emails, automating tasks such as reminding individuals of appointments, gathering employment information, and collecting post-exit information.

The AWIB implements memorandums of understanding, as appropriate, to ensure that the required common data elements can be collected and stored, and to facilitate shared use by all core programs. This process ensures that all the core programs are fully sharing resources as much as possible and that the process is transparent to the applicant. This alignment improves service delivery to individuals, including unemployed individuals, by helping to open lines of communication among staff, reducing duplication of service, and improving efficiency.

Alaska has successfully reported all elements identified in WIOA Section 116(d)(2), a record that has continued with the implementation of AlaskaJobs.

Participant activity for WIOA Title I, II, III, TAA and SCSEP are housed in AlaskaJobs, allowing for non-duplication of services, common exit, and common participant reporting. Title IV data is housed in the AWARE system for performance reporting.

Eligible training providers submit training program completion data into AlaskaJobs, with exception of the University of Alaska System and the Alaska Vocational Technical Center, who provide annual imports of training program completion data directly to DOLWD's Research and Analysis section. This information is merged with core program participant outcome and unemployment insurance wage data.

The core programs, SCSEP, TAA, Research and Analysis, and unemployment insurance are all part of the Alaska DOLWD, successfully ensuring a coordinated approach to data sharing and reporting. All aspects of the collection, exchange and reporting of required performance data have been implemented.

AlaskaJobs is maintained by a contracted vendor, Geographic Solutions Inc., which has extensive experience with data collection and accurate PIRL reporting. GSI provides quarterly and annual extracts of performance data for Alaska staff to review, and in-house staff produce monthly reports on ETA Quarterly Reports Analyses metrics and negotiated performance metrics for current statuses and trends.

## **B. ASSESSMENT OF PARTICIPANTS' POST-PROGRAM SUCCESS**

In addition to the defined WIOA performance indicators, Alaska has two unique data sets that give it more options for performance analysis. Alaska can determine who left the state by accessing applications for the state's Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend, a program that distributes a share of oil-related state investment earnings each year to Alaska residents. Alaska also has more detailed information about worker occupations because it has been the only state with a history of collecting that information as part of employers' mandatory quarterly reporting under state UI laws. This information, combined with PIRL-based data on participant training completion, entered employment, job retention, entered education, and earnings

change, allows for a more in-depth performance analysis to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce system and inform continuous improvement activities.

#### C. USE OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) WAGE RECORD DATA

Alaska will continue to use quarterly UI wage records to look at outcomes in terms of occupations, wages, etc. The state will carefully control individuals' data and release only aggregated data consistent with federal and state regulations and statutes. DOLWD's Research and Analysis Section has a history of successfully working with various programs to obtain and analyze data while maintaining confidentiality and privacy safeguards.

#### D. PRIVACY SAFEGUARDS

Alaska will carefully control individuals' data and release only aggregated data consistent with federal and state regulations and statutes. DOLWD restricts access to microdata with file protocols, staff are familiar with working with confidential data, and they are required to take regular training with the Bureau of Labor Statistics to ensure they are using the most up-to-date procedures.

UI wage record data are securely transferred from the state's UI program to DOLWD's Research and Analysis Section through system extracts. The records are then reviewed for quality control and stored in restricted-access folders. Except where specifically allowed or required by state statute (AS 23.20.100) or federal regulation (20 CFR 603.5), the wage record data are only released or published in aggregated form so that names and other confidential information of individual workers and individual firms are never revealed.

The analysts and economists who work with the data receive annual confidentiality training on state procedures and protocols and participate in annual data confidentiality training on federal-state cooperative data programs with the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. In over 15 years of working with confidential K-12, university, and UI data, there has never been a breach of confidentiality or any type of accidental disclosure.

#### 7. PRIORITY OF SERVICE FOR VETERANS

Alaska state policies ensure Priority of Service (POS) to all covered persons and that they are identified at the initial point-of-entry whether in-person, at an AJC, or through AlaskaJobs.

After the Jobs for Veterans Act was enacted into Public Law 107-288, and after changes under the WIOA, the state revised, published, and issued an updated POS Policy 07-509.1. This policy requires that veterans and other covered persons under Public Law 107-288 receive POS under all employment and training programs funded by the USDOL.

DETS administers many programs that are covered by the laws, regulations, and policies encompassing POS. These include the WIOA Adult, Youth, and Dislocated Worker programs, Wagner-Peyser, Trade Act programs, National Emergency Grants, SCSEP, Helmets to Hardhats, and the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI).

#### **Staff Training**

All WIOA and Wagner-Peyser staff receive training including specifics about the Jobs for Veterans Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and other legislation that impacts veteran priority, preference, and employability. All AJC staff are also required to complete the National Veterans Training Institute (NVTI) "A Day in the Life of JVSG Staff in an American Job Center" course, which provides a broad overview of how the Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) staff operate within the AJC. AJC efforts focus on the initial assessment of veterans to facilitate delivery of career and training services, as well as conducting outreach to employers to promote veteran hire. POS education efforts include signage at all AJC entry points. Additionally, all AJC staff provide initial contact, POS, and general information.

## **POS Definition**

POS means that eligible veterans and covered persons receive head-of-the-line privileges for all programs funded either in whole or in part by the USDOL. All recipients of WIOA funds for employment and training programs are required to identify those who are eligible for POS at the points-of-entry to programs, resources, and services. Once veterans or eligible persons meet a program's eligibility requirements, AJC staff ensure covered persons receive POS, as specified. Other community service providers funded by WIOA or Wagner-Peyser agreements are aware of their requirement to provide POS to veterans and eligible persons.

## **AlaskaJobs**

When staff assist a job seeker, AlaskaJobs clearly identifies whether the individual is a veteran or eligible spouse. When staff see this alert, they know POS is in effect and act accordingly. DETS provides POS by moving veterans and eligible spouses to the top of sign-up lists for workshops and other resources and through dedicated computers for use by veterans at the larger AJCs. As such, veterans and eligible persons receive services and resources before non-covered persons. Local offices annotate veteran status on resource room sign-in logs and staff members compile information for the managers. Regional managers monitor AJC activities by frequent connection with the AJC managers and through weekly or monthly reports.

## **Disabled Veterans' Outreach Programs**

Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) staff are funded by the Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG). The JVSG utilizes federal funding to hire dedicated staff to provide individualized career and training-related services to veterans and other eligible individuals with significant barriers to employment (SBEs) as well as assisting employers in filling their workforce needs with job-seeking veterans. These staff members provide vital services to both veterans and employers seeking employment-related assistance.

The DVOP specialists are housed in AJCs located in areas with the highest veteran populations and provide in-depth interviewing and comprehensive assessments to identify employment goals, interim objectives, and appropriate services that will enable the veteran and/or eligible spouse to meet his or her employment goals. DETS complies with all federal guidance for JVSG staff and seeks to fully utilize the expertise of DVOPs and LVERs. DETS developed a referral process to direct veterans and eligible spouses to the appropriate staff member to ensure a client-centered approach to the delivery of career and training services.

When job seekers indicate veteran status upon initial entry to an AJC, staff ask additional questions to determine if they have an eligible SBE. Staff utilize a one-page, quick-look DVOP eligibility guide which contains a concise list of SBE criteria, along with the definitions of eligible spouse, homelessness, and Alaska low-income limits. If a determination is made that the veteran is eligible and in need of individualized career services they are referred to the DVOP specialist for further assessment. If DVOP services are unavailable, the next available AJC staff member sees the veteran.

AJCs follow a team approach to serving customers, including providing services to veterans. Teams work together to support the roles of LVERs and DVOPs in providing services to veterans. All staff are trained to deliver as many services to veterans as possible to ease the burden on DVOPs. DETS encourages staff to engage veterans and insists that all AJC staff are veterans' representatives, not just JVSG-funded staff. The state follows all Special Grant Provisions, Veterans' Program Letters, USDOL/VETS Law 107- 288, and United States Code Title 38.

## **8. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES**

The state's One-Stop system of Alaska Job Centers (AJCs) has developed a comprehensive approach to ensure accessibility and inclusion of all customers, including those with disabilities, to all facilities, programs, and services. Physical and programmatic accessibility are continuously evaluated with an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) assessment incorporated into the One-Stop certification process and continuous improvement strategies planned and implemented when needed. Alaska will continue to refine the policies, training, and continuous improvement strategies to ensure compliance with WIOA and continued compliance with ADA.

The One-Stop system's approach to ADA compliance includes:

- Physical and programmatic accessibility;
- Staff training and accountability;
- Adaptive technology and other accommodations; and
- On-going survey of effectiveness and continuous improvement.

Physical and programmatic accessibility

- Job centers provide individuals with disabilities access to information, resources, programs, and activities in a manner that allows each individual, no matter their disability, the opportunity of full inclusion. All workshops, public access, programs, etc. are fully accessible, to ensure that the opportunities and benefits provided by the job center are available to individuals with disabilities in an equally effective and integrated manner;
- "Alaska Job Center Universal Access for Customers with Disabilities" policy plays a vital role in establishing the working-level framework for outlining and improving the accessibility, capacity, and accountability of AJCs to serve customers with disabilities. The policy covers both physical and programmatic accessibility within AJCs and outlines the assistive technologies available and required staff training;
- Each location has appropriate signage identifying the policy that no individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefit of, the services, programs, or activities of the AJCs;
- All job centers use universal design with printed materials. All posters, flyers, brochures, etc. use common principles throughout the design. The outreach and marketing materials developed for distribution from the AJCs to partners, job seekers, and employers contain notice of the availability of auxiliary aids and services for needed accommodations to access programs and services; and
- Alaska maintains an ADA Compliance Program: <http://doa.alaska.gov/ada/>. Through the state ADA Coordinator's Office, each department has its own designated ADA coordinator, who acts as a technical assistance provider and liaison for that department.

Training and accountability for all AJC staff

- As a result of three Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) grants, all AJC staff have and will continue to receive Disability Resource Coordinator I (DRC I) training, which includes awareness of programmatic and physical barriers to accessibility and covers familiarity of the "ADA checklist for Readily Achievable Barrier Removal." The ADA checklist is completed annually at each facility and any needed corrective action is identified and implemented;
- The DRC I training is an integrated and mandated part of new-hire training for all AJC staff;

- The Local AJC Managers and Vocational Rehabilitation Managers identify periodic and on-going training in specialized topics to augment standardized training and ensure continual learning and awareness in improving access to all services within the AJC system for individuals with disabilities; and
- Each AJC manager documents physical and programmatic complaints and ensures a corrective action plan is developed and addressed by the most appropriate and relevant method: policy change, training, or addressing physical barriers.

#### Adaptive technology and other accommodations

- Each AJC is equipped with a Universal Access Accessibility Station that is designed to improve the quality of the job applicant's experience, no matter the disability. Each station is designed with state-of-the art technology that can help job seekers with disabilities navigate the world of work with based on their personal independence level.
- Assistive Technology (AT) available includes screen readers, magnifiers, adaptive software, virtual sign language interpretation, closed captioning on scrolling program and services video, motorized adjustable workstations, specialized keyboards and mice, TTY phones, and personal voice amplification device;
- "Tips for Improving Access to Workshops and Training" has been developed and is a part of the staff training and resources. This document offers guidance and suggestions on increasing accessibility and success for individuals attending AJC workshops and training sessions and is broken down by disability type. The document outlines ways the facilitator or trainer can incorporate accommodations and adaptations into the class to ensure an optimal learning environment for all; and
- Any program and service may be accommodated for full inclusion on an "as needed" basis with the accommodation being dependent on the needs of the individual customer and provided through the AJCs in collaboration with partners.

#### On-going survey of effectiveness and continuous improvement

- AJC certification is a collaborative process involving all partners of the One-Stop delivery system. The joint AJC management team collectively completes the documents and surveys for the certification and submits them to the AWIB for approval. Certification involves reviewing site working agreements, cost allocations, self-assessment surveys, and the ADA accessibility survey. In addition to reviewing all submitted documents, members of the AWIB conduct an on-site review identifying best practices and need for corrective action planning. Based on their review and findings, the AWIB recommends and approves certification; and
- Regular AJC management team meetings occur among all on-site partners, during which all joint operations are discussed and plans for system improvement and any corrective action are implemented. This forum is effective for change and involves addressing and improving accessibility for customers with disabilities.

### 9. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

In coordination with the Alaska Adult Education program, the Division of Employment and Training Services provides job center staff with materials, resources, and annual training to meet the needs of Limited English Proficient individuals. Training addresses multiple areas, such as identifying and tailoring service to meet a client's communication strengths; directing a conversation using clear, basic terminology; using appropriate body language; and active listening. Staff are provided with materials published by Alaskan and national agencies such as

the Anchorage Mayor's Office and U.S. Department of Education regarding the contributions and experiences of new Americans to gain familiarity with and respect for these clients' diverse backgrounds, challenges, and talents, and best approaches to serving them. The AJCs also maintain a contract for telephonic language interpreter services and can take advantage of direct referral to the Alaska Immigration Justice Project Language Interpreter Center.

#### IV. COORDINATION WITH STATE PLAN PROGRAMS

Designated staff representing each core program including Titles I, II, III, IV, Veterans, and the Senior Community Service Employment Program meet on a regular basis to implement joint planning and coordination efforts. The working group addresses various issues including data coordination, policy development, performance accountability, Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), and One-Stop operator designation. The Combined Plan programs strive for workers' economic self-sufficiency by aligning workforce development with education and economic development to support employment and training opportunities, and career progression opportunities for all Alaskans. Updates to this plan are from findings of WIOA board members' planning meetings and surveys, along with ongoing input from employers, apprentices, workforce intermediaries, state agencies, and other partners' joint planning and coordination efforts to develop these WIOA goals, strategies, and performance measures. Core and partner program staff continue to meet to explore and enhance best practices for providing job seekers suitable employment and employers qualified, well-trained candidates.

An example of joint planning and coordination of core programs with other programs is the Alaska State Plan on Aging under the Older Americans Act (OAA) that was approved on August 29, 2019, for October 1, 2019, through June 30, 2023. The Senior Services State Plan was developed by the Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) in conjunction with the Division of Senior and Disability Services and the Division of Employment and Training SCSEP. It is the culmination of years of planning, surveying, and in-depth consideration of specific goals, including that seniors are financially secure. Through these joint planning efforts, Alaska aims to keep pace with its employment needs through planning, advocacy, and public awareness efforts, in collaboration with all organizations focused on the well-being of Alaskans.

The coordination and planning process also included nine listening sessions in May 2021, a statewide senior survey, and a provider survey to identify the top issues of concern to Alaskans. Access to health care and financial security are the greatest concerns for respondents of the 2018 Senior Survey. The provider survey identified financial need (not enough food, money to cover energy costs, etc.) as the most important issue facing Alaskan seniors today. To address this need, DVR, WIOA, ACoA, and SCSEP are developing a Senior Employment Initiative to promote services to seniors who desire to or need to be employed because they do not have enough retirement income, and to assist them in obtaining new skills so that they can remain competitive and find employment.

The combined WIOA plan is developed alongside several existing and collaborating planning efforts: Alaska Career and Technical Education Plan; Apprenticeship Training Plan; Alaska Gasline Workforce Plan; Alaska Health Workforce Development Plan; Building Alaska's Construction Workforce Development Plan; Alaska Transportation Industry Workforce Development Plan; Alaska Maritime Workforce Development Plan; Alaska Mining Workforce Development Plan; and Alaska Core Competencies for Direct Care Workers in Health and Human Services.

Another example of joint planning and coordination is determining the state's Effectiveness in Serving Employers performance indicators. After multiple discussions among the WIOA core and required partners, Alaska uses, and is committed to improving, its Employer Penetration and Retention Rates. Our approach to serving employers emphasizes proactive, staff-initiated outreach designed to meet the current and future employment and training needs of Alaska

employers. This focus will continue to facilitate long-term business relationships built on confidence and trust between Alaska employers and well-trained job center staff.

#### V. COMMON ASSURANCES (FOR ALL CORE PROGRAMS)

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The State has established a policy identifying circumstances that may present a conflict of interest for a State Board or local board member, or the entity or class of officials that the member represents, and procedures to resolve such conflicts;	Yes
2. The State has established a policy to provide to the public (including individuals with disabilities) access to meetings of State Boards and local boards, and information regarding activities of State Boards and local boards, such as data on board membership and minutes;	Yes
3. The lead State agencies with optimal policy-making authority and responsibility for the administration of core programs reviewed and commented on the appropriate operational planning elements of the Unified or Combined State Plan, and approved the elements as serving the needs of the populations served by such programs;	Yes
4. (a) The State obtained input into the development of the Unified or Combined State Plan and provided an opportunity for comment on the plan by representatives of local boards and chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, institutions of higher education, the entities responsible for planning or administering the core programs, required one-stop partners and the other Combined Plan programs (if included in the State Plan), other primary stakeholders, including other organizations that provide services to individuals with barriers to employment, and the general public, and that the Unified or Combined State Plan is available and accessible to the general public; (b) The State provided an opportunity for review and comment on the plan by the State Board, including State agency official(s) for the Unemployment Insurance Agency if such official(s) is a member of the State Board;	Yes
5. The State has established, in accordance with WIOA section 116(i), fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that may be necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds paid to the State through allotments	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
made for the core programs to carry out workforce development activities;	
6. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with uniform administrative requirements in this Act, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the uniform administrative requirements under WIOA section 184(a)(3);	Yes
7. The State has taken the appropriate action to be in compliance with WIOA section 188, Nondiscrimination, as applicable;	Yes
8. The Federal funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program;	Yes
9. The State will pay an appropriate share (as defined by the State board) of the costs of carrying out section 116, from funds made available through each of the core programs;	Yes
10. The State has a one-stop certification policy that ensures the physical and programmatic accessibility of all one-stop centers with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA);	Yes
11. Service providers have a referral process in place for directing Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) to DVOP services, when appropriate; and	Yes
12. Priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses is provided in accordance with 38 USC 4215 in all workforce preparation, development or delivery of programs or services funded directly, in whole or in part, by the Department of Labor.	Yes

## VI. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

### PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES UNDER TITLE I-B

#### A. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

##### 1. REGIONS AND LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS

The current waiver to allow the State Board to also carry out the functions of a Local Board expires June 30, 2022. Alaska is again requesting a waiver in Plan Section VI (E): Waiver Request to Allow the State Board to Carry out the Roles of a Local Board.



Under WIOA definitions, a single “local area” cannot contain more than one “region.” Alaska is a single workforce area state, so in many aspects we operate like a single planning area. However, operationally, the state bases planning and labor market analysis on the six existing state-defined “economic regions” – Southeast, Southwest, Anchorage/Mat-Su, Interior, Northern, and Gulf Coast – as each one has different economic and workforce needs.

AWIB members come from a variety of industries and represent all geographic and economic regions of the state. They bring the voice of employers, educational institutions, Alaska Native regional corporations, and other workforce partners in their respective regions. The AWIB focuses on employer engagement, connecting education and training strategies through building career pathways; supporting work-based learning; and improving career results for all job seekers and employers alike, based on the demographics and needs of each economic region. The AWIB will continue to successfully carry out the functions of both a state board and a local board, as it has for over a decade.

The AWIB developed policy and procedures for Local Workforce Area Designation under WIOA, which allow a local governing board to request such designation. Should an application be submitted, it would be reviewed by the AWIB, and then a recommendation for approval or denial would be forwarded to the governor. An applicant would need to demonstrate that the proposed area:

- Is consistent with local labor market areas;
- Has a common economic development area;
- Has the federal and non-federal resources, including appropriate education and training institutions, to administer activities under the Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker formula programs under WIOA Title I- B; and
- Has the fiscal, administrative, and reporting capacity and systems in place to report on participant outcomes as required by WIOA and the Alaska WIOA Combined Plan.

To determine whether a local area meets the criteria for “performed successfully” and “sustained fiscal integrity” in accordance with Section 106(b)(2) and (3) of WIOA, the AWIB will annually monitor the performance measure outcomes and fiscal records and reporting systems of the local area.

### **Input from local officials**

The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) solicited input on the Combined WIOA Plan from stakeholders across the state. DOLWD received no response to the draft local area designation, waiver, and appeals process, and there have been no requests received for designation as a local area.

The AWIB will continue to solicit feedback from local officials and employers in two ways: 1) outreach by individual Board members to their local officials; and 2) opportunities for input at each Board meeting, which are held at various locations around the state. The AWIB will focus on statewide strategies and their linkage to regional economic and workforce development resources and needs.

The policy sets out the procedure for appeals as follows:

- The governor may approve or deny the request for designation. In either case, DOLWD will notify the applicant in writing. If the request is denied, the written notification will include the reasons for the denial;
- If the request for local area designation is denied, the applicant may appeal;

- Appeals must be made to the AWIB and must address each issue cited in the denial notification; and
- If a decision on the appeal is not made within 60 days or if the appeal to the AWIB does not result in designation of the local area, the applicant may request a review by the Secretary of Labor in accordance with 20 CFR Section 683.640 of the WIOA statute.

The lead agencies of the core programs worked together and with the AWIB on an infrastructure funding process that is included as a required part of the partner Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The Infrastructure Funding Agreement is inherent to the MOU and therefore is subject to Section VI (a):

## VI. GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. PARTNER IMPASSE RESOLUTION - Should any dispute or disagreements between partners regarding this MOU require discussion and resolution, applicable steps as required by WIOA and other applicable authorizing Acts and laws shall be followed. Parties shall continue with their responsibilities under this MOU during any period of dispute or disagreement. Disputes shall be resolved in a timely manner.

i. Informal Dispute Resolution Process - The AJCN partners agree to communicate openly and directly to resolve any problems or disputes related to provision of services in a cooperative manner and at the lowest level of intervention possible. In the event of an impasse between any AJCN partner and another AJCN Partner or the One Stop Operator, an attempt to resolve the impasse shall first be made within five business days from when the first impasse occurred between the two parties involved in the disagreement.

ii. Local Dispute Resolution Process - If the impasse cannot be resolved through informal efforts, each party agrees to separately submit a written explanation within 15 business days from when the first impasse occurred to the One Stop Operator describing the nature of the dispute, steps taken to resolve differences, and recommend solution(s) to the impasse. The One Stop Operator or his/her designee will confer with each partners' operational authority when attempting to resolve the impasse. The decision of the One Stop Operator will be issued in writing within 15 business days from receipt of the written explanation.

iii. Alaska Workforce Investment Board Dispute Resolution Process – to appeal the decision of the One Stop Operator, a party shall submit information regarding the impasse in writing to the AWIB Executive Director. The Executive Director will collect information from all parties and the One Stop Operator and coordinate with the Executive Committee for final resolution. Following consideration of provided materials, the AWIB Executive Committee shall issue a decision. If the impasse is between an AJCN partner and the One Stop Operator, and cannot be resolved by an informal dispute resolution process, the AJCN partner and One Stop Operator will directly engage in the AWIB dispute resolution process.

## 2. STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES

Alaska follows the requirements set out in 20 CFR Part 682.200 for the use of State funds, and these activities are supported by various policies. Annually, the amount of State funds needed is identified and may be shifted between activities as necessary.

State funds will be used for (1) carrying out the provision of Rapid Response; (2) the ongoing maintenance and dissemination of the eligible training provider list; (3) conducting program evaluations; (4) providing technical assistance to job center staff and partners; (5) staff development; (6) addressing obstacles for individuals with barriers to employment; (7) regional planning efforts; (8) the development of industry and sector partnerships; (9) addressing performance deficiencies; (10) conducting monitoring and oversight; (11) providing

additional assistance to local areas that have a high concentration of eligible youth; and (12) operating a fiscal and management information system.

Additionally, state funds will support the state strategic vision and goals outlined in Section II (b) State Strategic Vision and Goals of this Combined Plan. This includes actively engaging at-risk youth; expanding Registered Apprenticeships; prioritizing services to target populations; making data driven decisions to promote job creation; leveraging resources; and streamlining processes including the coordination and alignment of data systems.

Policies that support statewide activities include:

- Co-enrollment Policy 07-505.1
- Data Integrity Policy 07-541
- Eligible Training Provider List Policy 07-501.2
- Equal Opportunity Discrimination Complaints Policy 07-506.4
- High Concentration of Eligible Youth Policy 07-503.3
- Job Center Universal Access for Customers with Disabilities Policy 07-516
- Military Veteran Priority of Service Policy 07-509.1
- Monitoring and Single Audit Policy 07-523.1
- Priority Populations – Adult Populations Policy 07-517.1
- Quality Pre-Apprenticeship Definition Policy 07-525.1
- Self-Sufficiency Policy 07-514
- Supportive Services Policy 07-521.1

The state is using the governor's set-aside funds to purchase and implement a Software-As-A-Service Virtual OneStop (VOS) System to replace the WIOA Title IB, II, III, and Trade Adjustment Assistance systems; the Work Opportunity Tax Credit system; and Electronic Grants Administration and Management System. This new robust system, called AlaskaJobs, connects with Alaska's Unemployment Insurance system to offer a common front door for employers, training providers, UI customers, job seekers, and workers. Additionally, VOS allows for streamlined services to customers, prevent duplication of data entry, leverage program resources, and ensure complete and accurate common PIRL reporting. The VOS implementation date was July 1, 2020.

A priority of WIOA and the State of Alaska is to further address the needs of at-risk youth. The governor's set aside funds will be used to support the following youth focused projects and initiatives:

- **Alaska's At- Risk Youth Initiative** complements the WIOA Youth program to ensure all Alaska youth have an opportunity to participate in services and activities leading to credential attainment or unsubsidized employment. The At-Risk Youth Initiative primarily targets youth exiting the foster care system, a treatment facility, or detention facility to ensure a successful transition. However, any Alaska youth identified as needing employment-related support and who is not currently working with a WIOA Youth provider, will be assessed to determine the best track within the available service structure. The At-Risk Youth Initiative also includes maintaining and assessing data to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the available service structure.

- **The Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project** is led by the Alaska Coalition to End Homelessness, with Covenant House Alaska serving as the lead agency. A Youth Task Force made up of a diverse group of youth and young adults, the majority of whom have experienced homelessness, targets the most critical areas needing support: youth who identify as LGBTQ, pregnant & parenting youth, victims of trafficking and or domestic violence, youth who have been involved with the child protection, foster care, and juvenile justice systems, and those with specific behavioral health or substance abuse needs. YHDP activities focus on finding host homes when foster care is untenable, permanent supportive housing to assist youth with more serious needs such as mental health issues, rapid re-housing into home environments instead of shelters, and a permanency navigator team to alleviate being shuffled between case managers when moving from one system, organization, or program to another.

Addressing the needs of transitioning military members is also supported by the governor's set aside funds. Alaska's Helmets to Hardhats (H2H) program connects transitioning service members with employment opportunities within the construction industry. This program is the first in the nation to provide actual hands-on training in multiple trades. H2H has been a positive investment for Alaska's large transitioning service member population.

### **Rapid Response**

Alaska views Rapid Response as a primary gateway to the workforce system for employers and workers who have been impacted by economic dislocations, industry declines, and natural disasters. The goal is to ensure communities, employers, and workers have the support and resources needed while in transition. Rapid Response acts as both a provider of direct reemployment services and as a facilitator of additional services and resources.

Funds are used to respond to dislocation events quickly while ensuring maintenance of Rapid Response quality principles: (1) timeliness; (2) convenience; (3) customer choice; (4) consistent and accurate information; (5) resource leveraging; (6) seamless service delivery; (7) active promotion; (8) layoff aversion; (9) performance measurements; and (10) partnerships.

Alaska's statewide Rapid Response coordinator leads a team of specialists housed in job centers throughout the state. This team works together to quickly address layoffs and business closures. Notification of layoffs or business closures are received through a variety of means including workers filing unemployment insurance claims, direct contact from impacted employers and workers, media announcements, fluctuations in employer tax contributions, and WARN notices.

Rapid Response meetings are tailored to each dislocation, and may include information on unemployment insurance, job search and placement assistance, labor market information, on-the-job training, classroom training, and referral to basic and remedial education. Depending on the demographics of the worker group, partners may present services available through their organizations, interpreters may be provided to address ESL needs, and mental health support may be made available.

Alaska's Rapid Response program is proactive, and layoff aversion is a priority. Ongoing engagement, partnership, and relationship-building with employers are essential to ensuring they understand how these services can help during all stages of the business cycle. Early intervention is critical for a layoff aversion effort to succeed. There must be enough time to identify strategies to address the potential layoff and organize an effective response. Rapid Response has the ability to: coordinate multiple agencies and provide assistance with studies to determine if it is feasible to save a struggling business and to identify what resources are needed to help; explore employee stock ownership plans; upgrade worker skills in order for workers to maintain their employment in a growing or changing company; analyze business planning, new product development, and market options; and coordinate with economic development and other partners.

In the event of a natural disasters, Rapid Response is coordinated with appropriate federal, state, and local agencies to ensure impacted communities, first responders, businesses and workers receive the support and services needed. Each response is tailored to the unique characteristics of the event, and Alaska has a proven history of responding in both urban and rural areas to storm damage, floods, wildfires, and earthquakes. Coordination with local, state, and federal emergency management agencies is necessary to ensure robust and non-duplication of services.

Depending on the type of event, the Rapid Response coordinator works with the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Bureau of Land Management, Alaska Interagency Coordination Center, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and local community partners to develop a response. In cases of a FEMA-declared disaster, the Rapid Response coordinator assesses the need and makes recommendations for application of a National Dislocated Worker Grant to support temporary jobs for clean-up and recovery efforts, humanitarian assistance for disaster victims, or training and support for workers who lost their jobs due to the disaster. Formal Rapid Response meetings may be held for groups of impacted individuals and/or information provided at a booth or table set up in the community to answer questions and provide information on and referrals to unemployment insurance, disaster unemployment insurance, temporary jobs, public assistance, community-based resources, small business development centers, and job center services.

Alaska maintains a statewide TAA coordinator and a comprehensive TAA website that contains a list of all companies in Alaska certified under a TAA petition, a TAA Program brochure, benefit information, links for employers and layoff resources for workers at [jobs.alaska.gov/taa](http://jobs.alaska.gov/taa). Alaska Job Center and Unemployment Insurance call center staff help to identify trade-affected workers and submit a completed "TAA Think Differently" form to the TAA coordinator at [dol.taa@alaska.gov](mailto:dol.taa@alaska.gov) to investigate. The TAA and Rapid Response coordinators consult on all dislocation events to determine the potential of trade impact. If trade impact is likely, the TAA coordinator investigates to collect information to assist with filing, or files a petition, on behalf of the employer or worker group to USDOL. Before filing a petition, the Rapid Response and TAA coordinators meet with the employer to explain TAA program benefits and petition process and to gather information.

When a TAA petition is filed, the TAA coordinator immediately notifies the Rapid Response coordinator, CSTS, and Employment Service (ES) program staff in the job centers. Rapid Response and appropriate career services are provided as soon as possible after the petition is filed whether before or after the actual layoff, while the petition is under investigation, or after a petition determination is made, and whether or not the petition is certified. The TAA coordinator is a lead member of the Rapid Response team when threatened and actual layoffs are trade related. The Rapid Response team provides early intervention by coordinating with the employer to schedule on-site and/or virtual worker informational meetings before the layoff event. This ensures the workers are provided the information and resources needed for a smooth transition into the provision of employment and training services. Rapid Response team members charge staff time to the Rapid Response program grant when working on Rapid Response-related activities. Early intervention is provided by ES and CSTS staff when trade-affected workers contact a job center based on written guidance from the TAA coordinator. ES staff ensure trade-affected workers are aware of resources and career services available to them. They determine their immediate needs and refer the worker to the CSTS Dislocated Worker program for an appointment with a case manager to receive appropriate career and supportive services and training as appropriate. These workers are often dislocated workers and eligible for the Dislocated Worker program.

When a TAA petition is certified, the TAA coordinator immediately obtains a list of impacted workers from the employer and notifies each worker of TAA eligibility through a formal letter. The TAA notification packet also contains detailed information on TAA benefits, timelines to

apply, and an application for a TAA eligibility determination. A public notice is issued, and the names of affected workers are provided to Alaska Job Center managers. Additionally, specific information on TAA is presented to workers during on-site and virtual Rapid Response informational meetings. Eligible workers seeking TAA services are informed of the benefits of co-enrollment and must be co-enrolled with the WIOA DW and TAA programs if they are otherwise eligible. Co-enrollment leverages resources to ensure that a trade-affected worker's case management, reemployment plan, supportive, training, and follow-up service needs are met.

## B. ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKERS PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

### 1. WORK-BASED TRAINING MODELS

The state utilizes on-the-job training and incumbent worker training models and is exploring customized training options.

Oftentimes the best candidate for a job is not necessarily the most qualified. Sometimes the best candidate has a positive attitude but lacks specific skills needed for the job. Employers frequently interview job seekers who would be good hires if training were available to better prepare them.

On-the-Job Training (OJT) gives employers the opportunity to tap into a pool of workers who are good candidates for a job but may need some training to be qualified. OJT is actively marketed through the AJCs, and formal contracts between the state and employer are utilized to ensure OJTs are legal and lead to high quality training.

AJC staff take an active role to ensure OJTs are successful and provide ongoing monitoring of OJT participant progress. Studies of unsuccessful OJTs indicate that most of them fail shortly after they begin, often within the first few weeks. Thorough screening of individuals and employers before referral is the best way to prevent this, but regular status updates from both the employer and the trainee are also important. Staff initiate contact with the employee and the employer before the first two weeks of the OJT has ended, and at the OJT worksite at least once during the term of the agreement.

A percentage of local formula adult and dislocated worker funds is utilized for incumbent worker training (IWT). The annual amount identified for IWT fluctuates depending on employer needs, and it does not exceed 20 percent of local funds. Alaska's IWT program increases the competitiveness of the business and incumbent workers by ensuring they acquire the skills necessary to retain employment, advance within the business or to gain the skills necessary to avert a layoff.

Alaska recognizes and understands the needs of employers to have a skilled workforce and the multiple benefits that OJT, incumbent worker training, and customized training provide, and will dedicate additional resources to focus on these work base training models. Employer awareness and outreach will be increased to identify and respond to employer's unique workforce development needs.

### 2. REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

DOLWD's Apprenticeship Coordinator works with employers and the U.S. Office of Apprenticeship in Anchorage to expand Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs in the state.

The state has implemented a strategic plan for expanding Registered Apprenticeship, which includes these objectives and action steps:

1. Implement state policies to support registered apprenticeship

- a. Identify current state policies that support registered apprenticeship and recommend others that could be revised or created, such as tax credits, training vouchers, utilization requirements, etc.
  - b. Prioritize registered apprenticeship as a workforce development model in DOLWD and align resources as needed in support of it.
  - c. Coordinate with other state agencies to incorporate registered apprenticeship into all state Human Resources and hiring practices.
  - d. Identify opportunities to leverage and align existing systems and resources to support registered apprenticeship, such as WIOA, STEP, other workforce training programs, DVR, Returning Citizens, etc.
  - e. Apply for available apprenticeship grants.
2. Expand employer and sponsor participation
- a. Develop and maintain consistent branding, messaging, strategies, and materials, including electronic and print, for effective outreach and marketing.
  - b. Develop partnerships with employers and industry organizations to increase employer engagement.
  - c. Provide technical assistance to employers and sponsors on the details and requirements of Registered Apprenticeship.
  - d. Develop innovative approaches to suit the capacity and needs of employers, including development of multi-employer sponsors when feasible.
  - e. Expand Registered Apprenticeship programs to non-traditional industry sectors.
3. Expand apprentice participation to underserved populations and regions
- a. Establish additional rural-focused apprenticeships in occupations such as teacher, teacher aide, water and wastewater operators and technicians, health care workers, and mining to increase registered apprenticeship opportunities for those living in villages and hub communities.
  - b. Partner with groups, agencies, and programs, including Job Corps, Alaska Native organizations, DVR, SNAP/TANF, STEP, DOC, and HSS, to expand apprenticeship programs to improve recruitment and retention for Alaska Natives and other minorities, veterans, people with disabilities, women, individuals experiencing long-term unemployment, and those with other barriers to training and employment.
  - c. Develop best practices to implement U.S. Department of Labor guidance for apprenticeship practitioners and equal opportunity programs and policies.
4. Expand pre-apprenticeship, school-to-apprenticeship, and postsecondary registered apprenticeship programs
- a. Train and support high school career and technical education programs in developing School-To-Apprenticeship programs and leveraging resources such as federal Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education funding.
  - b. Expand outreach to other secondary programs such as Job Corps, Alaska Military Youth Academy, and charter or alternative schools.

- c. Expand the use of American Council of Education (ACE)-accredited programs to provide RTI for registered apprenticeship in multiple industries.
- d. Provide technical assistance to University of Alaska, Alaska Pacific University, regional training centers, and other postsecondary programs in aligning/articulating apprenticeship programs with college credit and degree programs.
- e. Work with apprenticeship intermediaries to create quality pre-apprenticeship programs tailored to the needs of employers and prospective sponsors.

### 3. TRAINING PROVIDER ELIGIBILITY PROCEDURE

Alaska's ETPL is a comprehensive list of training providers' programs that maintain performance levels identified by the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB).

Alaska's ETPL policy 07-501.1 was revised in June 2020. All ETPL forms and applications were updated December 2021. The ETPL Operating Guide has been updated and is awaiting final approval.

Additionally, the state has implemented the new AlaskaJobs system that houses ETP information and performance in an easy to read and understand format for the public. The state has tested system capabilities and functionality to ensure the data requirements needed for ETP eligibility are met.

Program performance is reviewed biennially and the ETPL updated on an ongoing basis. Alaska ETPL policy, applications, and operating guide are located at <https://www.labor.alaska.gov/dets/etpl.htm>.

To be considered for the ETPL, all training providers must have a status (authorized or exempt) with the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE) per Alaska Statute 14.48.20 "Authorization and Permits Required." ACPE's authorization ensures postsecondary education providers and training programs meet the standards as outlined in law. ACPE determines if a postsecondary institution meets the minimum standards regarding institutional soundness, quality of education, ethical business practices, and fiscal responsibility. Any institution offering postsecondary programs, courses, vocational training, or an educational credential, including distance education, must be authorized or determined exempt from authorization.

In addition to the ACPE requirement, new providers and services requiring initial ETPL approval must: complete an application, provide three years of student data, provide details on the program, demonstrate efficiency, and commit to collect and provide annual performance data. New programs are added to the ETPL as they apply, and initial eligibility remains in effect at least one year. Continued eligibility is determined on a biennial basis and based on the program's performance.

Training program performance is determined by using student data provided by the training provider and UI wage records to calculate:

**Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit:** The number of students who have completed and exited the training program during the reporting period who are employed during the second



quarter after exit (numerator) divided by the number of students who have exited during the reporting period (denominator), multiplied by 100, and reported as a percentage.

**Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit:** The number of students who completed the training program and have exited the training program during the reporting period who are employed during the fourth quarter after exit (numerator) divided by the number of students who have exited during the reporting period (denominator), multiplied by 100, and reported as a percentage.

**Median Earnings Rate:** The median earnings of students who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program. Students' quarterly earnings will be obtained from UI wage records. The median earning amount is the wage at the midpoint between the highest and lowest wage earned in the second quarter after exit.

**Credential Attainment Rate:** The number of students who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential during participation or within one year after exit (numerator) divided by the total number of students exiting the program (denominator), multiplied by 100, and reported as a percentage.

**Completion Rate:** The number of participants who completed their training program (numerator) divided by the total number of students exiting the program (denominator), multiplied by 100, and reported as a percentage.

The following are specific to the training provider and program and are used for either initial or continued eligibility, or both.

**Industry Recognized Credential:** The training program leads to a recognized postsecondary credential.

*Performance Goal:* Credentials offered by the provider are regionally, and/or nationally recognized, stackable, and portable, or specific to an in-demand industry or occupation. (Initial eligibility)

**Information reported to state agencies on federal and state training programs other than WIOA Title 1-B programs:** the state is determining how additional information obtained through state funded training and partner programs e.g. Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, Trade Adjustment Assistance, the State Training and Employment Program, Alaska Construction Academies, Technical and Vocational Education Program, etc. will be incorporated to determine continued eligibility. This will be included in the revised policy and operational guide.

**In-demand Occupation/Industry:** The degree to which training program relates to in-demand industry sectors and occupations in the State. A list of Alaska's in-demand industry sectors and occupations can be located on the AWIB website <http://labor.alaska.gov/awib/>.

*Performance Goal:* The training program relates to occupations located on the in-demand industry and priority occupation list. If the training is not associated with these occupations, an exemption may be provided if the program is used to address participants who possess a barrier to employment, specialized occupations, or unique employer requests (both initial and continued eligibility).

**Partnership with Business:** This may be done by providing letters of support from business or other documentation showing a partnership between the training provider and business. Additionally, the Division may review training participant wages data to establish that participants are able to secure employment with the training received.

*Performance Goal:* Training participants can secure employment with the training and credentials received from the training provider. (Initial eligibility)

**State Accessibility and Distance Delivery:** The ability of the training program to be accessed throughout the state, including rural areas using technology.

*Performance Goal:* The training program is available via distance learning, if applicable, or deliverable in rural locations (initial eligibility).

**Completer Data:** Timely and accurate student completer data is submitted annually as required by WIOA.

*Performance Goal:* Training providers submit complete and accurate student completer data by August 31st each year (continued eligibility).

#### **Performance Levels for Initial ETPL Eligibility of Existing Training Programs**

<b>Rate and Earnings</b>	<b>Point Value</b>
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit must meet 60 percent	15
Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit must meet 60 percent	15
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after Exit must meet \$5,025	15
Credential Attainment Rate must meet 65 percent	7.5
Program Completion Rate must meet 35 percent	7.5
Industry Recognized Credential	20
Partnership with Business	5
Accessible Throughout the State by Web Based Learning	5
In Demand Industry/Occupation	10
Total Points Available	100

Note: Initial eligibility for existing training program(s) must score at least 75 points to qualify

#### **Performance Levels for Initial ETPL Eligibility of New Training Programs**

<b>Rate and Earnings</b>	<b>Point Value</b>
New Program – No Completer Data Available	N/A
Industry Recognized Credential	20
Partnership with Business	5
Accessible Throughout the State by Web Based Learning	5
Industry Recognized Credential	10
Total Points Available	40

Note: Initial eligibility for new training program(s) must score 30 points to qualify

#### **Performance Levels for Continued Eligibility**

<b>Rate and Earnings</b>	<b>Point Value</b>
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit must meet 60 percent	20
Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit must meet 60 percent	20
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after Exit must meet \$5,025	20
Credential Attainment Rate must meet 65 percent	10
Program Completion Rate must meet 35 Percent	10
In Demand Industry/Occupation	20
Total Points Available	100

Note: The training program must score at least 80 points to qualify for continued eligibility.

Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs registered under the National Apprenticeship Act are eligible to be included on the ETPL and not subject to ETPL data reporting and performance related requirements, as RAs go through a detailed application and vetting process at the US DOL in order to qualify, and the apprenticeship programs are monitored regularly by US DOL apprenticeship staff.

The US DOL Office of Apprenticeship provides the division with a quarterly report of new and cancelled RA programs. The Division or the USDOL will contact RA sponsors to ask if they want their program listed on the ETPL. RA sponsors who wish to be included on the ETPL must notify the Division and provide information specific to their RA program. For proper identification and reporting purposes, the title of the ETPL training program must match what is specified within the apprenticeship standards.

Registered apprenticeship programs will remain on the ETPL until they are deregistered; or the RA program notifies the State that it no longer wants to be included on the ETPL; or until the registered apprenticeship program is determined to have intentionally supplied inaccurate information or to have violated any provision of title I of WIOA or the WIOA regulations, including 29 CFR part 38.

Deregistered apprenticeships will be reclassified as non-registered apprenticeships and their exemption status removed. If the registered apprenticeship was listed on the ETPL at the time of its removal from the national apprenticeship registry, the training provider will be held accountable to the same rules, regulations, and performance criteria as a regular training provider.

A registered apprenticeship program whose eligibility is terminated for intentionally supplying inaccurate information will be terminated for not less than 2 years and is liable to repay all youth, adult, and dislocated worker training funds it received during the period of noncompliance.

When a Registered Apprenticeship program is using a third-party vendor for related technical instruction, the vendor providing the instruction may receive funds under WIOA without the related technical instruction program being listed on the ETPL.

#### 4. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT AND MONITOR THE PRIORITY FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS, OTHER LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS, AND INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF WIOA SEC.

134(C)(3)(E), WHICH APPLIES TO INDIVIDUALIZED CAREER SERVICES AND TRAINING  
SERVICES FUNDED BY THE ADULT FORMULA PROGRAM

Alaska's Policy 07-517.1 supports the adult priority populations. Staff responsible for the delivery of WIOA Title I-B funds must adhere to this policy and give priority to individuals for the provision of individualized career services and training services. Alaska's policy was updated to reflect TEGL 19-16.

Veterans and eligible spouses continue to receive Priority of Service (POS) for all DOLWD-funded job training programs. However, as described in TEGL 19-16, when programs are statutorily required to provide priority for a group of individuals, such as the WIOA Adult program priority population described above, priority must be provided in the following order: first, to veterans and eligible spouses who are also included in the groups given statutory priority for WIOA adult formula funds, meaning that veterans and eligible spouses who are recipients of public assistance, low-income, or basic skills deficient would receive first priority for services provided with WIOA adult formula funds; second, to non-covered persons, meaning individuals who are not veterans or eligible spouses, who are included in the groups given priority for WIOA adult formula funds; third, to veterans and eligible spouses who are not included in WIOA adult program's priority groups; and last, to non-covered persons outside the groups given priority under the WIOA adult program.

Alaska Job Centers are monitored annually, including monitoring for priority of service for public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient. Monitoring includes the review and evaluation of physical documentation and participant files in the case management system. Characteristics and statistics are examined to compare priority subpopulations to the population as a whole. This information is used to inform outreach, partnering, and awareness strategies for program enrollment. Alaska policy states that WIOA Adults who receive individualized career and training services must have documentation justifying the priority population designation. State policy outlines the Priority of Service for Title 1 Adults, and the only way someone can receive individualized career or training services is through meeting one of the categories for priority of service.

5. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S CRITERIA REGARDING LOCAL AREA TRANSFER OF FUNDS  
BETWEEN THE ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKER PROGRAMS

Alaska's WIOA Title IB Within State Funding Allocation Policy 07-518.1 provides for transfer authority of up to 100 percent of funds between Adult and Dislocated Worker. The Alaska Workforce Investment Board resolution 16-06 provides this authority to the DETS Director or designee. The transferring of funds to or from the Youth Program is not allowed.

Transferring funds between the Adult and Dislocated Worker program or among economic regions is necessary to address the area's economic needs. Reasons may include large layoffs leading to additional employment and training services for workers, military base realignments, incumbent worker training to address automation or a changing business practice, capital improvement projects, rapid growth or decline in population, etc. Quarterly expenditure evaluations are conducted to identify a need for fund transfers when a service area is under- or over-expending.

C. WITH RESPECT TO YOUTH WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES AUTHORIZED IN  
SECTION 129 OF WIOA—

1. IDENTIFY THE STATE-DEVELOPED CRITERIA TO BE USED BY LOCAL BOARDS IN  
AWARDING GRANTS OR CONTRACTS FOR YOUTH WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES AND  
DESCRIBE HOW THE LOCAL BOARDS WILL TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THE ABILITY OF THE  
PROVIDERS TO MEET PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES BASED ON PRIMARY  
INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE FOR THE YOUTH PROGRAM AS DESCRIBED IN SECTION  
116(B)(2)(A)(II) OF WIOA IN AWARDING SUCH GRANTS OR CONTRACTS.[11]

Grants are awarded through a competitive grant solicitation process using DOLWD's online grants management system; grant opportunities are posted on the state's online public notice website at <https://aws.state.ak.us/OnlinePublicNotices/>. The state uses additional approaches such as radio and social media to advertise grant solicitations to reach a broader pool of applicants.

The solicitation for program operators occurs annually with oversight by the AWIB. Program performance is reviewed annually. Grant agreements are awarded for one fiscal year with an option to renew for an additional year at AWIB's discretion. The additional-year grant cycle ensures project time frames are adequate to meet long term youth services and career pathway needs.

The AWIB manages the grant solicitation process, which includes all stages from application announcement through application review and making recommendations to the Labor Commissioner, who is the final arbiter for approving or denying grant awards.

### **Award Criteria**

Applicants seeking to manage a WIOA Youth program are evaluated on their ability to meet the WIOA Youth performance measures in 116(b)(2)(A)(i) and (ii) of WIOA based on their infrastructure, project resources, partnerships, and program model. Experience and success in managing non-WIOA Youth programs are also evaluated, as are the nature and location of the target population to be served.

Applicants seeking renewal of a WIOA Youth grant are evaluated on their continued ability to meet performance goals and project objectives.

### **2. DESCRIBE THE STRATEGIES THE STATE WILL USE TO ACHIEVE IMPROVED OUTCOMES FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH AS DESCRIBED IN 129(A)(1)(B), INCLUDING HOW IT WILL LEVERAGE AND ALIGN THE CORE PROGRAMS, ANY COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS INCLUDED IN THIS PLAN, REQUIRED AND OPTIONAL ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS, AND ANY OTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE.**

To guide and support services to out-of-school youth, the AWIB focuses at least 75 percent of WIOA Youth grant funds on serving this demographic. These programs are given priority during the competitive solicitation process.

The state continues to develop comprehensive and integrated service delivery systems targeting out-of-school youth. The most recent strategy implementation is the addition of an At-Risk Youth initiative. This project continues to identify youth-service gaps existing in core programs and develops innovative strategies and partnerships to mitigate or eliminate deficiencies in service delivery. In doing so, this project complements WIOA Youth services for at-risk youth populations including out-of-school youth, youth aging out of the foster care system, and youth exiting the justice system.

The state holds monthly program status meetings with all project operators to provide ongoing technical assistance, announce policy updates, review and assess service strategies, and share best practices across programs. The state also hosts an annual statewide training event for technical assistance to WIOA Youth providers.

Intentional and collaborative referral processes are being developed between core programs, businesses, and community partners, which continues to be a primary strategy to improve service delivery and participant outcomes.

A strong partnership has been developed with the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education and the Department's Youth initiative, which requires each youth served to be enrolled in ACPE's web-based Alaska Career Information System (AKCIS), which is provided at no charge to all Alaskans. In AKCIS, participants develop a career and learning plan that focuses

on career exploration and guidance, postsecondary educational attainment, and pathway opportunities for skills training in in-demand industries and occupations. While developed initially in consultation with a case manager, the individual learning plan will be independently accessible and updateable by the participant at any time. The state will also utilize this partnership to develop and maintain a network of core service providers, local youth resources, and other youth serving entities that will be available to youth within AKCIS. This information will provide youth with instruction on how to navigate the system and identify which services and entities best fit their need based on their desired career path.

To improve youth attainment of degrees or industry-recognized credentials to meet labor market demands, the state continues to require grant applicants to identify and partner with occupational training providers, pre-apprenticeship programs, and apprenticeship programs. Specific strategies to increase outcomes include:

1. creating a system-wide awareness of available services within the state WIOA core programs to foster co-enrollment of participants and leveraging of resources;
2. ensuring project operators provide assessments that address youth employment and academic service needs; identify auxiliary resources through appropriate partners; address support service needs; and develop an advancement plan for postsecondary education or employment outcomes;
3. partnering with occupational skills training centers to enroll youth in in-demand training opportunities that lead to industry-recognized credentials; and
4. co-enrolling youth, as appropriate, with one or more of the following programs for advanced training along a career pathway:
  - a. Registered Apprenticeship programs
  - b. State funded job training grant programs
  - c. One-Stop partners
  - d. Vocational Rehabilitation
  - e. Adult and Dislocated Worker program

3. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL ENSURE THAT ALL 14 PROGRAM ELEMENTS DESCRIBED IN WIOA SECTION 129(C)(2) ARE MADE AVAILABLE AND EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENTED, INCLUDING QUALITY PRE-APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS UNDER THE WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAM ELEMENT. [12]

The state ensures that all 14 basic elements are made available and effectively implemented through all stages of the grant cycle. During the solicitation process, all applicants must demonstrate the ability to deliver all 14 basic program elements either in-house or through a partner agency. Applicants must, in writing, describe how each service will be delivered from planning to implementation, and what resources, entities, curriculum, and strategies will be used to ensure effective delivery. If a program partner is utilized to carry out a basic element service, a detailed description of the partner must be provided along with the type of agreement, such as a letter of support, memorandum of agreement, contract, etc.

The grant agreement includes the approved text used in the application to describe the delivery approach for each of the 14 basic elements, and clearly defines the expectations for programs to make available each element to youth participants. The state requires each program allot 20 percent of their operating budget for work experience services and development or participation in quality pre-apprenticeship programs.

During the grant award negotiation process between AWIB grant staff and the subawardee, the grant deliverables are reviewed to ensure they are achievable and that the subawardee understands the adequate provision of the WIOA Youth 14 basic elements before final approval by the DOLWD Commissioner.

Monitoring and Single Audit Policy 07-523.2 ensures monitoring is conducted annually by the AWIB to ensure sound financial management, adherence to Equal Employment Opportunity laws, and compliance of program activities with statutory and regulatory language. Monitoring ensures all 14 Youth program services are made available to all eligible youth, including:

- provision of support activities to ensure program quality and performance goals are achieved;
- demonstrated alignment with the Youth program design components or requirements outlined in legislation;
- demonstrated alignment with policies, guidance, and advisories issued to support program performance; and
- implementation of appropriate program practices and procedures, including participant eligibility, assessment, planning, service delivery, and other agreed upon activities and outcomes defined in the negotiated grant award.

The state requires grant applicants to identify and partner with occupational training providers, pre-apprenticeship programs, and apprenticeship programs.

4. PROVIDE THE LANGUAGE CONTAINED IN THE STATE POLICY FOR “REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO ENTER OR COMPLETE AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM, OR TO SECURE AND HOLD EMPLOYMENT” CRITERION FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(B)(III)(VIII) AND FOR “REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO COMPLETE AN EDUCATION PROGRAM, OR TO SECURE AND HOLD EMPLOYMENT” CRITERION FOR IN-SCHOOL YOUTH SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(C)(IV)(VII). IF THE STATE DOES NOT HAVE A POLICY, DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL ENSURE THAT LOCAL AREAS WILL HAVE A POLICY FOR THESE CRITERIA.

The definition of “requires additional assistance to complete an educational program, or to secure and hold employment” for in-school and out-of-school youth is outlined in WIOA Youth Program Eligibility Policy 07-502.2 and means any youth who:

- lacks the employability skills to obtain or retain employment; or
- lacks access to training opportunities due to geographic challenges; or
- requires special accommodations for education or employment due to a disability; or
- has cultural dissonance; or
- is a migrant youth; or
- is currently attending an educational program and
  - has previously dropped out of an educational program; or
  - has poor attendance patterns in an educational program during the last 12 calendar months; and
  - has below average grades; or
- is not attending an educational program and

- has no vocational or employment goal; and
- has a poor work history (including no work history), or as been fired from a job in the last six calendar months; or
- has completed full high school attendance and
  - failed comprehensive high school graduation tests; and
  - was denied a high school diploma; and
  - requests and requires intensive tutoring or remedial education to prepare for and retake the comprehensive examinations or the General Education Development (GED) examination.

5. INCLUDE THE STATE DEFINITION, AS DEFINED IN LAW, FOR NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL AND ATTENDING SCHOOL AS SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(B)(I) AND SECTION 129(A)(1)(C)(I). IF STATE LAW DOES NOT DEFINE “NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL” OR “ATTENDING SCHOOL,” INDICATE THAT IS THE CASE AND PROVIDE THE STATE POLICY FOR DETERMINING WHETHER A YOUTH IS ATTENDING OR NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL.

State law does not define “attending school” and “not attending school,” but Alaska Statute 14.30.010(a) states: “Every child between seven and 16 years of age shall attend school at the public school in the district in which the child resides during each school term.” The state defines dropout in 4 AAC 06.895(k)(3) as:

"dropout" means an individual who was enrolled in the district at some time during the school year whose enrollment terminated; "dropout" does not include an individual who:

- graduated from high school or completed a state- or district-approved education program, as evidenced by receipt of a secondary school diploma from school authorities;
- transferred to another public-school district, private school, or state- or district-approved education program that terminates in a regular diploma;
- is temporarily absent due to suspension;
- is temporarily absent due to an illness or a medical condition; or
- died.

6. IF USING THE BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENT DEFINITION CONTAINED IN WIOA SECTION 3(5)(B), INCLUDE THE STATE DEFINITION WHICH MUST FURTHER DEFINE HOW TO DETERMINE IF AN INDIVIDUAL IS UNABLE TO COMPUTE OR SOLVE PROBLEMS, OR READ, WRITE, OR SPEAK ENGLISH, AT A LEVEL NECESSARY TO FUNCTION ON THE JOB, IN THE INDIVIDUAL’S FAMILY, OR IN SOCIETY. IF NOT USING THE PORTION OF THE DEFINITION CONTAINED IN WIOA SECTION 3(5)(B), INDICATE THAT IS THE CASE.

The State is using the ACT WorkKeys Curriculum Placement Quiz or WorkKeys Skill assessment to determine computing and problem solving basic skill levels. A score of level 4 or below in either assessment is considered basic skills deficient. Likewise, the state considers individuals assessed by the Alaska Adult Education Program and determined to be in need of English Literacy and Civics Education Programming to be basic skills deficient in the areas of reading, writing, or speaking English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual’s family, or in society.

#### D. SINGLE-AREA STATE REQUIREMENTS

1. ANY COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD THAT REPRESENT DISAGREEMENT WITH THE PLAN. (WIOA SECTION 108(D)(3).)



2. THE ENTITY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DISBURSAL OF GRANT FUNDS, AS DETERMINED BY THE GOVERNOR, IF DIFFERENT FROM THAT FOR THE STATE. (WIOA SECTION 108(B)(15).)

3. A DESCRIPTION OF THE TYPE AND AVAILABILITY OF WIOA TITLE I YOUTH ACTIVITIES AND SUCCESSFUL MODELS, INCLUDING FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES. (WIOA SECTION 108(B)(9).)

### **1. Public comment**

Alaskans had the opportunity to comment on the draft state plan through public meetings of the Alaska Workforce Investment Board and through email, which was posted on the DOLWD and AWIB webpages and sent out via the state's online public notice system. The plan was public noticed from February 15, 2022, through March 1, 2022. There were no comments that represented disagreement with the plan.

### **2. Entity responsible for grant fund disbursement**

State of Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development is responsible for disbursement of grant funds.

### **3. WIOA title I Youth activities and successful models**

Youth project operators are secured from the six economic regions of the state via a competitive solicitation process. Project operators provide academic, employment, and training services to eligible in-school and out-of-school youth ages 14-24. The project operators offer a comprehensive workforce development program that prepares youth for postsecondary education, employment, career development, and provides accommodations and support services for youth with disabilities.

Project operators work closely with Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) counselors to leverage resources between programs. The Department has also implemented an At-Risk Youth project that coordinates and leverages efforts and services with WIOA Youth and DVR, ensuring a comprehensive suite of programs and services are available to all youth in need; project operators are tied into this collaboration.

Each project operator offers unique service delivery models based on their location, area served, and target population. A best practice for programs statewide is the development of youth-operated businesses that offer a nurturing environment for skill development, community connection and support, and a consistent work experience opportunity through which to rotate youth.

The state makes available the WIOA Youth 14 basic program elements and ensures all project operators demonstrate within their proposals the resource capacity to provide an objective assessment and an individual service strategy that includes development of a career pathway using the Alaska Career Information System (AKCIS) for each participant. Project operators provide services for each of the WIOA Youth elements based on the federally prescribed services identified in WIOA Section 129(c)(2), Program Elements and expanded on below:

1. tutoring, study skills training and instruction leading to high school completion, including dropout prevention strategies;
2. alternative high school services which offer specialized, structured curriculum inside or outside of the public-school system;
3. summer youth employment that takes place between May 15th and September 30th and consists of employment for which youth are paid a wage and results in occupational learning that leads to an employment goal;

4. paid and unpaid work experiences including internships and job shadowing, are short-term, planned, structured learning experiences that occur in a workplace and are focused on career exploration and the development of work readiness skills;
5. occupational skills training that leads to the attainment of a certificate or credential; including participation in Job Corps, apprenticeship programs, and training programs that provide skills necessary to enter or advance in a specific occupation;
6. leadership development opportunities including community service and peer-centered activities that encourage responsibility, employability, and other positive social behaviors;
7. adult mentoring in a one-to-one supportive relationship between an adult and a youth that is based on trust and lasts for duration of at least 12 months;
8. supportive services to enable an individual to participate in program activities such as housing, meals, medical care, daycare, transportation, school related supplies, and training related supplies;
9. follow-up services to monitor the success of youth during their transition to employment or education and help as needed for a successful transition;
10. comprehensive guidance and counseling to help youth make and implement informed educational, occupational, and life choices;
11. financial literacy education to gain skills needed to create household budgets, initiate savings plans, and make informed financial decisions about education, retirement, home ownership, wealth building, and other savings goals;
12. entrepreneurial skills training using a curriculum based training module that teach youth the value of being skilled and applying those skills to meet a consumer need or demand, to think creatively and critically, to problem solve; how to recognize opportunities, and other skills related to entrepreneurialism;
13. career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration using labor market and employment information on in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area; and
14. activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training including exposure to postsecondary education options, assisting youth with placement into postsecondary education, and placement into training opportunities such as apprenticeships and occupational training.

#### 4. A DESCRIPTION OF THE ROLES AND RESOURCE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE ONE-STOP PARTNERS.

One-stop Partner roles and resource contributions are identified in the updated Alaska One Stop Partner Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) posted here: [https://awib.alaska.gov/forms/PartnerMOU\\_22.pdf](https://awib.alaska.gov/forms/PartnerMOU_22.pdf). (Please note corrected link.) Section IV(b) details the partner roles and responsibilities, attachment A explains partner provided services in detail, and attachment C provides the Infrastructure Funding agreement.

In accordance with the MOU and Section 121(b), the partners will be responsible to provide available career services in a non-discriminatory and universally accessible manner, provide referrals to system partners, serve populations with multiple barriers to employment, support the cross training of partner agency staff to ensure familiarity with and representation of all programs, participate in communications and workgroup planning, and share in the equitable and proportionate share of job center operational costs that benefit their program(s) participants.

**5. THE COMPETITIVE PROCESS USED TO AWARD THE SUBGRANTS AND CONTRACTS FOR TITLE I ACTIVITIES.**

The Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker funding is distributed through the Alaska Job Centers and not issued through subawards.

Youth program project operators are distributed across Alaska's six economic regions through a competitive solicitation. A full solicitation is conducted every other year from February through April, with subawards issued at the beginning of the state fiscal year in July. In alternate years, project operators in good standing have their grants continued for a second year, based on funding availability. A limited solicitation is conducted if a project operator is not renewed and a replacement operator in that locality is sought. This solicitation schedule allows for new project operators to be secured as needed and high performing project operators to continue uninterrupted operations in support of participants.

The AWIB, in coordination with department leadership, is responsible for identifying program focus areas, currently pre-apprenticeship opportunities, apprenticeship opportunities, and suicide prevention awareness. Additionally, the AWIB Executive Committee reviews and approves solicitation documents. AWIB grant committees review all subrecipient project proposals and provide recommendations for funding to the Commissioner.

**6. HOW TRAINING SERVICES OUTLINED IN SECTION 134 WILL BE PROVIDED THROUGH INDIVIDUAL TRAINING ACCOUNTS AND/OR THROUGH CONTRACTS, AND HOW SUCH TRAINING APPROACHES WILL BE COORDINATED. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL MEET INFORMED CUSTOMER CHOICE REQUIREMENTS REGARDLESS OF TRAINING APPROACH.**

Alaska currently utilizes both Individual Training Accounts (ITA) and Incumbent Worker Training (IWT). ITA service delivery is coordinated through Alaska's Job Center case management staff who work one-on-one with each participant in the development of Individual Employment Plans (IEP). The IEP ensures participant engagement and commitment. The process of career exploration and assessment provides the individual with various options of career entry, career path, and (if needed) training provider selection through the state's Eligible Training Provider List, ensuring informed customer choice at each stage leading to the ITA.

Alaska's IWT focuses on training needed by incumbent workers to retain or succeed in their current occupation or career ladder, providing increased skills that will ensure their employment and provide increased productivity or competitiveness to the employer.

**7. HOW THE STATE BOARD, IN FULFILLING LOCAL BOARD FUNCTIONS, WILL COORDINATE TITLE I ACTIVITIES WITH THOSE ACTIVITIES UNDER TITLE II. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE BOARD WILL CARRY OUT THE REVIEW OF LOCAL APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED UNDER TITLE II CONSISTENT WITH WIOA SECS. 107(D)(11)(A) AND (B)(I) AND WIOA SEC. 232.**

Title I activities are delivered through the Alaska Job Centers except for the youth program, which is delivered through a variety of project operators, procured through a competitive subgrant process, and located throughout the 6 economic regions. Alaska Adult Education (AAE), Title II, is also procured through a competitive, three-year subgrant process to eligible providers of adult education located serving the identified economic regions.

Activities between Title I and Title II are coordinated through a referral system. Individuals utilizing adult and dislocated worker services through job centers, who need adult education or need to complete their GED or English as second language courses, are referred to the AAE providers. AAE providers refer participants to the adult, dislocated worker, or youth programs for services they are unable to provide, including case management, individualized and support services or postsecondary training services.

8. COPIES OF EXECUTED COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WHICH DEFINE HOW ALL LOCAL SERVICE PROVIDERS WILL CARRY OUT THE REQUIREMENTS FOR INTEGRATION OF AND ACCESS TO THE ENTIRE SET OF SERVICES AVAILABLE IN THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM, INCLUDING COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH ENTITIES ADMINISTERING REHABILITATION ACT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES.

The AWIB finalized the One-Stop Operator MOU, including the Infrastructure Funding Agreement, with required partners effective to June 30, 2025. The full document is available at [https://awib.alaska.gov/forms/OperatorMOU\\_2022.pdf](https://awib.alaska.gov/forms/OperatorMOU_2022.pdf).

E. WAIVER REQUESTS (OPTIONAL)

The current waiver to allow the State Board to also carry out the functions of a Local Board expires June 30, 2022. Alaska is requesting a renewal of this waiver. The information below provides the plan and justification for this waiver request.

**(1) Statutory or regulatory requirements and goals**

Goals of this combined state plan and the waiver request are to continue improving the efficiency and performance of Alaska's workforce system. Allowing the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) to also carry out the roles of a local board for the state will continue to streamline the governance structure at the state level by having one board overseeing the workforce investments across the state. In its current structure, the AWIB is housed under the Alaska Commissioner of Labor and works closely with all DOLWD programs to ensure inclusivity and diversity as it relates to the local areas.

The State of Alaska requests the continuance of its waiver, per application of WIOA Section 107(b), which allows the State Board to carry out the roles of the Local Board(s). Alaska has divided the state into two local areas, Anchorage/Mat-Su and Balance of State. This allows for more efficiency in planning and allocating resources. Anchorage/Mat-Su has the largest concentration of population and infrastructure in the state, while the Balance of State is more sparsely populated, with many small population areas and lack of infrastructure. Further, Alaska has a unique workforce. To ensure that the needs of both local areas are met, the AWIB continues to solicit feedback from local officials and employers in myriad ways, such as:

- Individual board member outreach to their local officials and employers.
- Opportunities for input at each meeting. The AWIB meets three times per year, usually at various locations across the state. The meetings focus on statewide strategies and linkage to the states regional economic and workforce development needs.
- Resident locations of the board members are varied throughout the state,
- Executive Director of the AWIB and staff travel statewide to attend local economic development gatherings and summits and meet with stakeholders and employers. Information, concerns, and successes are relayed back to AWIB board members in monthly committee meetings and at the full board meetings.
- AWIB has established a sub-committee to reflect the geographic diversity of the state.
- There are two non-voting seats on the Board for mayors from each local area.

There is still strong support for a waiver, as it is widely recognized that it makes sense for Alaska to continue with the State Board carrying out the role of the local boards. Disruption of this waiver would be counter-productive to workforce development in Alaska, as multiple local boards would consume funds that are better used for workforce development and would be difficult to staff and maintain.

The support for the waiver is bolstered by the equitable distribution of funding. Funding is distributed fairly, as outlined in Policy 07-518.1, which describes the allocation of WIOA Title IB funds between the two areas. From the balance of WIOA Youth, Adult and Dislocated Worker allotments after the statewide distributions, the DETS Director or designee determines the amount or percent of funding to be distributed to the economic regions for each program. WIOA Youth allocations are distributed primarily through competitive grants. Adult and Dislocated Worker allocations will be distributed through the job centers for Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) and Supportive Services, and through competitive grants. The most recent labor market, employment, and unemployment data available from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section, are used for allocation formulas between the two local areas. These formulas are based on the relative distribution of unemployed individuals between the areas.

In 2016 AWIB was first authorized status as an alternate entity with the requirement to add local input to the board structure. At that time, two non-voting seats consisting of local officials were created. The waiver request for alternate entity was approved again in 2018, and in 2020. Link to official letters on the AWIB webpage <https://awib.alaska.gov/ppi.htm>:

- 2016 Letter: [https://awib.alaska.gov/forms/AK\\_PY\\_2016\\_Waiver\\_Letter\\_June\\_2016.pdf](https://awib.alaska.gov/forms/AK_PY_2016_Waiver_Letter_June_2016.pdf)
- 2018 Letter: [https://awib.alaska.gov/forms/AK\\_PY\\_2018\\_Waiver\\_Letter\\_June\\_2018.pdf](https://awib.alaska.gov/forms/AK_PY_2018_Waiver_Letter_June_2018.pdf)
- 2020 Letter: [https://awib.alaska.gov/forms/AK\\_PY\\_2020\\_Waiver\\_Letter2\\_26\\_May\\_2020\\_signed.pdf](https://awib.alaska.gov/forms/AK_PY_2020_Waiver_Letter2_26_May_2020_signed.pdf)

Currently, the AWIB is authorized by Alaska statute and comprised of members appointed by the governor. Several of the governor's cabinet members are seated on the AWIB, including the Lieutenant Governor, the Commissioners of Labor and Workforce Development, Health & Social Services, Education & Early Development, and Commerce, Community & Economic Development. Board membership also includes a representative from the University of Alaska system and representatives from postsecondary vocational education, secondary vocational education, Alaska Adult Education, and public education. Four members of the board represent business and industry, and four represent organized labor. Additional board members include one who has professional experience with individuals with developmental disabilities, a member who is a veteran, a member from an organization representing the employment and training needs of Alaska Natives, and additional members from the private sector. In addition, two chief local elected officials have been appointed to the board to ensure local input for our Alternate Entity State Board. The current AWIB roster is available on the AWIB website [https://awib.alaska.gov/AWIB\\_roster.pdf](https://awib.alaska.gov/AWIB_roster.pdf).

## **(2) Actions to remove State or local statutory or regulatory barriers**

The governor has designated Alaska as a statewide area and workforce region for WIOA purposes. There are no state or local barriers to implementation of this waiver.

## **(3) Goals and expected programmatic outcomes**

The waiver will continue to streamline Alaska's governance structure and make it responsive to the uniqueness of the state's economy and geography, especially given current fiscal challenges.

The waiver will also streamline the process for awarding grants by eliminating multiple layers of administrative entities and processes. The AWIB, functioning as both the local and the state board, and housed under the Commissioner of Labor, will work closely with DOLWD in determining grant criteria, reviewing grant applications, and evaluating subrecipients.

The waiver will allow DOLWD to continue implementing consistent standards across the state, instead of having multiple boards with a variety of eligibility and performance standards in different parts of the state.

The waiver will result in improved accountability of workforce investment programs, as one board will oversee all workforce programs for consistency in the evaluation and oversight process. DOLWD will be able to continue to report as a single area.

#### **(4) How the waiver will align with department priorities**

- (A) supporting employer engagement;
- (B) connecting education and training strategies;
- (C) supporting work-based learning;
- (D) improving job and career results; and
- (E) other guidance issued by the Department.

Most AWIB members are representatives of business and the private sector. Board members come from a variety of industries throughout the state and are committed to bringing the voice of employers to the table and contacting others to engage them in the workforce system. In response to feedback from ETA, two chief local elected officials have been appointed to the board. The AWIB will continue to focus not only on employer engagement but on connecting education and training strategies through building career pathways, supporting work-based learning; and improving career results for all job seekers and employers alike.

#### **(5) Individuals affected and impact on services**

All WIOA-eligible participants, including disadvantaged populations and those with multiple barriers to employment, as well as employers, are positively impacted by this waiver. Participants and employers need not look to a different local area in the hopes of finding more resources, because the state functions and reports as a single statewide designation.

#### **(6) Processes to**

- (A) Monitor the progress in implementing the waiver;
- (B) Provide notice to any local board affected by the waiver;
- (C) Provide any local board affected by the waiver an opportunity to comment on the request;
- (D) Ensure meaningful public comment, including comment by business and organized labor, on the waiver.
- (E) Collect and report information about waiver outcomes in the State's WIOA Annual Report.

DOLWD solicited input on this waiver from local officials and employers across the state as a part of the plan development process. There were no local officials who requested designation as a local area, and DOLWD received no comments on the draft local area designation and waiver process.

The AWIB will continue to solicit feedback from local officials and employers by: 1) outreach by individual AWIB members to their local officials; and 2) opportunities for input at each meeting, which are held at various locations around the state. The AWIB will be focusing on statewide strategies and their linkage to the state's regional economic and workforce development needs.

The process by which a local area designation may be requested is described below and referenced in Section VI Program Specific requirements for Core Programs of the Alaska WIOA Combined Plan.

#### **Policy and Procedure**

The outline of the policy and procedure to request designation as a local area is:

## Policies

The chief elected official and local governing board from any unit of general local government or combination of units may submit a request for designation as a workforce development area. The AWIB, in consultation with DOLWD staff, will review the request and recommend approval or denial to the governor.

Designation as a new local area will be based on the extent to which the proposed area demonstrates that it:

- Is consistent with local labor market areas; and
- Has a common economic development area; and
- Has the federal and non-federal resources, including appropriate education and training institutions, to administer activities under the Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker formula programs under WIOA Title I-B; and
- Has the fiscal, administrative, and reporting capacity and systems in place to report on participant outcomes as required by WIOA and the Alaska WIOA Combined Plan.

The governor may approve or deny the request for designation. In either case, DOLWD will notify the applicant in writing. If the request is denied, the written notification will include the reasons for the denial. If the request for local area designation is denied, the applicant may appeal. Appeals must be made to the AWIB and must address each issue cited in the denial notification. If a decision on the appeal is not made within 60 days or if the appeal to the AWIB does not result in designation of the local area, the applicant may request a review by the Secretary of Labor in accordance with 20 CFR Section 683.640 of the WIOA statute.

## Procedures

A request for local area designation must be made on a form supplied by DOLWD. A completed and signed request must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on May 1 of the year preceding the Program Year for which the request is being made.

Any local area wishing to appeal the decision by the governor must be made in accordance with the appeal procedures described in Policies Section above. Incomplete or unsigned requests will be returned; review of the application will be delayed.

The governor will monitor the progress of this waiver by reviewing information provided by DOLWD and the AWIB on costs, processes for awarding grants, eligibility standards, and performance on accountability measures. This information will also be used to report about the waiver outcomes in the state's annual WIOA reports.

**(7) The Secretary may require that States provide the most recent data available about the outcomes of the existing waiver in cases where the State seeks renewal of a previously approved waiver.**

The state understands that Secretary may require us to provide the most recent data available about the outcomes of the waiver.

### TITLE I-B ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The State has implemented a policy to ensure Adult program funds provide a priority in the delivery of training services and individualized career services to individuals who are low	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
income, public assistance recipients and basic skills deficient;	
2. The State has implemented a policy to ensure local areas have a process in place for referring veterans with significant barriers to employment to career services provided by the JVSG program's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist;	Yes
3. The State established a written policy and procedure that set forth criteria to be used by chief elected officials for the appointment of local workforce investment board members;	Yes
4. The State established written policy and procedures to ensure local workforce investment boards are certified by the governor every two years in accordance with WIOA section 107(c)(2);	Yes
5. Where an alternative entity takes the place of a State Board, the State has written policy and procedures to ensure the alternative entity meets the definition under WIOA section 101(e) and the legal requirements for membership;	Yes
6. The State established a written policy and procedure for how the individuals and entities represented on the State Workforce Development Board help to determine the methods and factors of distribution, and how the State consults with chief elected officials in local areas throughout the State in determining the distributions;	Yes
7. The State will not use funds received under WIOA Title I to assist, promote, or deter union organizing in accordance with WIOA section 181(b)(7);	Yes
8. The State distributes adult and youth funds received under WIOA equitably throughout the State, and no local area suffers significant shifts in funding from year-to-year during the period covered by this plan;	Yes
9. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under	Yes



The State Plan must include	Include
Title I;	
10. The State agrees to report on the impact and outcomes of its approved waivers in its WIOA Annual Report.	Yes
11. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 2900, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance under section WIOA 184(a)(3);	Yes

#### ADULT PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2023 Expected Level	PY 2023 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	78.0%	78.0%	79.0%	78.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	77.0%	75.0%	78.0%	75.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$8,000.00	\$9,900.00	\$8,400.00	\$9,900.00
Credential Attainment Rate	63.5%	69.0%	63.5%	69.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	79.0%	81.0%	80.0%	81.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

*"Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being developed and this data will not be entered in the 2022 State Plan modifications.*

#### DISLOCATED PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2023 Expected Level	PY 2023 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	82.0%	83.0%	83.0%	83.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter	77.0%	81.5%	78.0%	81.5%

Performance Indicators	PY 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2023 Expected Level	PY 2023 Negotiated Level
After Exit)				
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$11,000.00	\$11,200.00	\$11,200.00	\$11,200.00
Credential Attainment Rate	50.0%	57.6%	50.0%	57.6%
Measurable Skill Gains	70.0%	87.0%	72.0%	87.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

*"Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being developed and this data will not be entered in the 2022 State Plan modifications.*

#### YOUTH PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2023 Expected Level	PY 2023 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	56.0%	58.0%	58.0%	58.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	53.0%	56.0%	54.0%	56.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$3,500.00	\$3,825.00	\$3,500.00	\$3,825.00
Credential Attainment Rate	55.0%	56.7%	55.0%	56.7%
Measurable Skill Gains	70.0%	70.0%	70.0%	70.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

*"Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being developed and this data will not be entered in the 2022 State Plan modifications.*

#### PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR WAGNER-PEYSER PROGRAM (EMPLOYMENT SERVICES)

##### A. EMPLOYMENT SERVICE STAFF

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL STAFF THE PROVISION OF LABOR EXCHANGE SERVICES UNDER THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT, SUCH AS THROUGH STATE EMPLOYEES, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO STATE MERIT STAFF EMPLOYEES, STAFF OF A SUBRECIPIENT, OR SOME COMBINATION THEREOF.

State merit staff provide labor exchange services under the Wagner-Peyser Act.

2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL UTILIZE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICE STAFF TO ENSURE STAFF IS ABLE TO PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY SERVICES TO BOTH JOBSEEKERS AND EMPLOYERS

Employment Service (ES) staff receive comprehensive professional development training during their first year of employment and ongoing refresher training to ensure they are prepared to provide high-quality employment and training services to job seekers, workers, and employers.

All ES staff participate in the Alaska Foundations of Workforce Professional Certification program. These are professional competency courses that mirror the National Association for Workforce Development Professionals core competency defined areas.

Staff training includes overviews of policies and procedures that guide their work; information on partners' employment and training programs and services; Rapid Response, Fidelity Bonding, Work Opportunity Tax Credit, Veterans programs and Priority of Service, state and federally funded training programs, Equal Employment Opportunity, disability awareness, etc. Additionally, ES staff also receive training on customer service skills, conducting a job search, and how to use the state labor exchange and case management system to assist both job seekers and employers.

Staff performance is monitored closely, and additional training is provided to correct areas of deficiency. Such training is provided through classroom instruction, webinars, and one-on-one sessions.

3. DESCRIBE STRATEGIES DEVELOPED TO SUPPORT TRAINING AND AWARENESS ACROSS CORE PROGRAMS AND THE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) PROGRAM AND THE TRAINING PROVIDED FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND WIOA STAFF ON IDENTIFICATION OF UI ELIGIBILITY ISSUES AND REFERRAL TO UI STAFF FOR ADJUDICATION

Alaska uses several strategies to ensure that core program staff understand the UI program, can make referrals to UI for claim filing and recognize and assist in responding to UI eligibility issues.

All ES and WIOA staff have a working knowledge and awareness of the UI requirement that claimants must register for work in the state labor exchange system, maintain an online resume, and conduct weekly work searches. UI policy, procedure, and instructional manuals are also available to all ES staff. Staff located in the AJC's guide UI claimants toward understanding and satisfying the UI requirements and assist them to contact the UI Claim Center for in-depth answers regarding eligibility. UI staff routinely provide UI eligibility issue training to ensure ES staff can recognize barriers and forward potential issues for investigation through a dedicated email address. Only UI staff are authorized to make determinations on UI issues.

The Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) team is led by a combination of UI and ES staff who work together to develop strategies that ensure UI claimants, particularly veterans and those deemed most likely to exhaust UI benefits, receive a combination of meaningful financial and job-search support while they are in transition. Development of these strategies necessitates a sound level of understanding of both programs. RESEA continuous improvement strategies include implementation of a required second assessment and interview for RESEA claimants who complete their first assessment and interview.

**B. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE WILL PROVIDE INFORMATION AND MEANINGFUL ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUALS REQUESTING ASSISTANCE IN FILING A CLAIM FOR UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION THROUGH ONE-STOP CENTERS, AS REQUIRED BY WIOA AS A CAREER SERVICE**

UI claimants and employers are priority customers at Alaska's AJCs. All AJCs have phone banks specifically identified for UI purposes. UI customers who use the phone banks at the AJC's have a dedicated queue, and their calls are given priority and are answered immediately by knowledgeable UI claim center staff. ES staff promptly assist claimants and employers to meet filing requirements for UI purposes and provide dedicated resources such as computers, telephones, fax machines, and printed materials regarding eligibility requirements and filing for UI benefits. ES staff have general knowledge and awareness of UI eligibility requirements and report potential issues to UI staff for follow-up.

**C. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S STRATEGY FOR PROVIDING REEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE TO UI CLAIMANTS AND OTHER UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS**

UI claimants are a priority population, and AJC staff are charged with improving claimants' services, training options, and support programs. One of the state's top priorities is the RESEA program. The goal is to reduce the number of UI benefit weeks paid to claimants by fast-tracking them into the right combination of reemployment services, resources, and opportunities designed to promote rapid reemployment. RESEA is offered in Alaska's six largest AJCs, which also have the highest percentage of UI claimants: Anchorage-Midtown, Mat-Su, Juneau, Fairbanks, Kenai, and Ketchikan. RESEA focuses on targeted assistance to two types of UI claimants: recently separated veterans and individuals most-likely to-exhaust UI benefits. For selection criteria, UI uses wage data and a USDOL ETA-approved statistical model that uses claimant characteristics and economic indicators to assess the likelihood of a claimant exhausting UI benefits.

Formal and on-going training is provided to staff in all AJCs participating in RESEA. As a best practice, AJC staff who have conducted past reemployment service programs participate in the development of new staff training materials, particularly during the transition period from one reemployment services version to another. Their input is crucial, as they are the experts at eliciting and reading the reemployment needs of the claimants they interview.

The UI office mails notifications weekly to selected claimants who have received a first payment of mandatory participation in RESEA and advises self-registration and completion of requirements immediately to ensure continued eligibility for UI benefits. In addition, to alert AJC RESEA staff, UI auto-transmits RESEA selection data to AlaskaJobs. To ensure that all selected claimants receive notification of the mandatory participation, AJC RESEA staff also receive an electronic list with the contact information of selected claimants. Staff then personally call all claimants to remind them of their responsibility to participate in the program to promote rapid reemployment. These calls also help to facilitate immediate registration into the mandatory in-person workshop to ensure all RESEA obligations are fulfilled timely. Extensive outreach uses the media, press releases, reminder postcards, and booklets strategically placed in military installation resource rooms.

Each claimant selected for RESEA is required to participate in a 90-minute, in-person, reemployment services and eligibility assessment workshop with RESEA staff. Based on the eligibility assessment, the orientation to AJC resources, the claimant's work search efforts combined with real-time labor market information, and the assessment of the unique reemployment needs of each claimant, an Individual Reemployment Plan is developed with the claimant. The claimant actively participates in the development of the Individual Reemployment Plan, increasing the likelihood it will be completed. Recommended services are explored and at least one service is provided during the 90-minute session, while others may be referred for

completion later using other reemployment and training resources including those funded under Wagner-Peyser, Dislocated Worker, Adult, and Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JMSG).

A large percentage of claimants selected for RESEA are military veterans, a group who are always a top priority in Alaska. Some of the veterans will be recently separated from the military and others will be veterans who meet the criteria associated with the most likely to exhaust UI benefits. The latter are veterans who are homeless, disabled, or have other significant barriers to reemployment. In the three RESEA AJCs with on-site Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) staff, a personal introduction and referral to the DVOP is the norm. In other AJCs, RESEA staff will telephonically introduce the RESEA participant to the DVOPs who serve veterans itinerantly for that region.

All the resources offered to claimants selected for RESEA are also available to other UI claimants, including those funded under Wagner-Peyser, Dislocated Worker, Adult, and JMSG. Service strategies include awareness through UI and ES outreach and reemployment assistance through comprehensive, readily available resources. All claimants receive notification from the UI program that reemployment services are offered from statewide job centers to help them find work. The notification is standard to all UI claimants and is viewable on the UI website from which claimants file claims, on mailed documents generated at the point of filing, and during telephonic interviews with UI claims-takers. All claimants are advised to register for work in AlaskaJobs. Upon registration, the menu of reemployment services is readily viewable by claimants and includes a link to the online Alaska Job Center Orientation (also available by ES workshop) which describes the in-person and online reemployment and training resources available through Alaska Job Centers. Job seekers self-identify as UI claimants upon registration in AlaskaJobs and when entering a job center. Job center walk-in claimants are greeted by frontline staff and asked to complete an assessment form describing their circumstances and reemployment needs. ES staff are trained to guide claimants through the reemployment process which includes registration, online resume, and job search requirements. All Alaska Job Centers have clearly marked, dedicated telephones in the resource rooms for use by UI claimants. Awareness of employment and training resources is enhanced by information posted in resource rooms and on our public website. Large stand-up banners located at the entrances of the participating RESEA job centers describe how UI claimants can take advantage of reemployment and training resources.

**D. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE W-P FUNDS TO SUPPORT UI CLAIMANTS, AND THE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN W-P AND UI, AS APPROPRIATE INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:**

UI benefits serve to not only bridge the economic gap for the individual worker, but also as a stabilizing influence on local economies, especially with the seasonal nature of much of the state's workforce. Workers who have become unemployed or are working less than fulltime are encouraged to apply for UI benefits as soon as possible and are provided labor exchange services. These services assist UI claimants with their job search efforts and are provided through the on-line labor exchange system and through resource rooms at AJCs. Job seekers can access to state and local jobs advertised by Alaska employers through the on-line labor exchange system and obtain help with resume development, additional job seeking methods, applications for employment, interviewing workshops, and more from AJC staff. Unless specifically exempted by UI, all claimants must actively be seeking work, be physically able and available to accept suitable, fulltime work.

In Alaska, unless specifically exempted by UI, claimants filing for benefits are responsible for registering for work and posting at least one online resume in AlaskaJobs within seven days of filing a new or reopened claim for UI benefits. Claimants must maintain the online resume and ensure it is current and accessible to employers by regularly checking that it is in online status. The registration and resume stay active while the claimant is actively engaged in job search and referral activities in AlaskaJobs and while receiving reemployment services from AJC staff. Instructions for registering in AlaskaJobs are provided to all claimants in the UI Claimant

Handbook. The online UI Filing Guide also provides registration instructions and includes a live link to AlaskaJobs.

Claimants required to register and post an online resume in AlaskaJobs are also required to perform work search contacts for each week they claim UI benefits. For the claimant and UI staff, applications for jobs posted on AlaskaJobs serve as an easily verifiable record of the number of job searches being conducted each week. The record also provides ES and RESEA staff with a way to ascertain the suitability and validity of claimant work searches. This information is one component that helps build the foundation for a solid reemployment plan. Work search efforts can be recorded and accepted on any template if the record is verifiable; however, both UI and ES provide a formal Work Search Log with clear instructions, and they encourage claimants to use it. If it becomes apparent to ES or RESEA staff that a claimant is not seeking work or has refused suitable work, ES staff will promptly notify their UI counterparts to alert them of the potential issue. In addition, all UI staff are trained to maneuver through AlaskaJobs to verify that a claimant is registered, has an online resume, and is conducting work searches.

UI claimants are provided information on training and education programs and resources through a variety of means. Referrals typically originate in the AJCs from ES and RESEA staff; however, UI staff may refer to these services when working with a UI claimant over the telephone. Referrals may also come from core partners such as Adult Education and Vocational Rehabilitation.

E. AGRICULTURAL OUTREACH PLAN (AOP). EACH STATE AGENCY MUST DEVELOP AN AOP EVERY FOUR YEARS AS PART OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN REQUIRED UNDER SECTIONS 102 OR 103 OF WIOA. THE AOP MUST INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF NEED. AN ASSESSMENT NEED DESCRIBES THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS IN THE AREA BASED ON PAST AND PROJECTED AGRICULTURAL AND FARMWORKER ACTIVITY IN THE STATE. SUCH NEEDS MAY INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO: EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, AND HOUSING.

1. ASSESSMENT OF NEED. PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS IN THE AREA BASED ON PAST AND PROJECTED AGRICULTURAL AND FARMWORKER ACTIVITY IN THE STATE. SUCH NEEDS MAY INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO: EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, AND HOUSING.

The geography and expense of traveling to Alaska limits influx of Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFW), and within Alaska, few workers travel to participate in various types of agriculture, aquaculture, and timber employment that fall under the definition of MSFW. As of June 30, 2020, 117 individuals self-identified as MSFW during both the peak and low seasons. According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, 93 percent of producers are white, and in discussion with employers, the same demographic appears to be true of employees. Alaska's farms are family owned and operated with little outside employment. Outside the family, hiring is usually restricted to intensive short-term employment of two weeks or less. Sometimes, college or high school students on summer break meet these needs and do not meet the definition of MSFW. As the population of MSFW is very limited, Alaska does not have National Farmworker Jobs Program grantees. However, coordination of services for employment, training, and housing from public and private community service agencies and groups are available to Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers as needed.

2. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY IN THE STATE MEANS: 1) IDENTIFYING THE TOP FIVE LABOR-INTENSIVE CROPS, THE MONTHS OF HEAVY ACTIVITY, AND THE GEOGRAPHIC AREA OF PRIME ACTIVITY; 2) SUMMARIZE THE AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS' NEEDS IN THE STATE (I.E. ARE THEY PREDOMINANTLY HIRING LOCAL OR FOREIGN WORKERS, ARE THEY EXPRESSING THAT THERE IS A SCARCITY IN THE AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE); AND 3) IDENTIFYING ANY ECONOMIC, NATURAL, OR OTHER FACTORS THAT

## ARE AFFECTING AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE OR ANY PROJECTED FACTORS THAT WILL AFFECT AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE

Alaska's Agriculture Outreach Plan includes traditional agriculture, aquaculture, and timber activities.

**Agricultural Overview:** Most of Alaska's traditional agricultural activities, however limited, are located in areas with the richest soils in the state: the Anchorage area, Matanuska-Susitna Valley (Mat-Su), Kenai Peninsula, Fairbanks, and Delta Junction. According to USDA Economic Research Service, Alaska's top five labor-intensive crops include bedding plants and flowers grown in greenhouses and nurseries, hay, barley, and vegetables.

A large number of Alaska's farms are located in the Anchorage/Mat-Su area. Here, the agricultural season extends from April through October, from planting during April and May, to growing season from May through August, and harvesting season from June through October. Timeframes across the state and within this area of fertile farmland differ depending on the crop, farming methods, location, and weather patterns. For outdoor planting, the average last frost date dictates when crops are planted and ranges from May 1st in the Anchorage/Mat-Su Valley to June 1st on the Kenai Peninsula and Fairbanks. Greenhouse operations generally start in mid-February and operate through late October. However, some greenhouse operations are year-round. Some farms similarly use hoop houses to cover patches of ground or raised beds with a series of hoops made of pipes covered with plastic. Hoop houses are another means to extend the farming season from April through October. Hydroponic farms are also growing in number. While they enable year-round production, hydroponic farms are still small-scale businesses in Alaska. For example, at its peak, the largest hydroponic farm in Alaska employs approximately 125 workers.

Alaska continues to increase its number of in-state agricultural businesses and thereby enhance Alaskan food security. However, because many communities are not connected to a road system, it remains expensive to bring goods to market. Small farms, which can focus on serving local markets, are increasing at a greater rate than in other states. Farm size is also impacted by a small labor pool, which faces competition from larger seasonal industries such as seafood processing and tourism. Economy of scale means that Alaska's farms are family owned and operated with little outside employment.

Outside the family, hiring is usually restricted to intensive short-term employment of two weeks or less. Sometimes, college or high school students on summer break meet these needs and do not meet the definition of Migrant Season Farmworker (MSFW). Most workers at Alaska's largest hydroponic farm, for example, are high school students. Other employees are local and do not meet the definition of MSFW, as they live close enough to travel to and from work each day (within 55 road miles as defined by Alaska Unemployment Insurance definition).

To receive H-2A visas, an employer is required to demonstrate a lack of available U.S. workers resulting from positive U.S. worker recruitment. Based on recent history, an average of three Alaskan agricultural employers pursue H-2A visas each year. These employers cite the lack of skills in nursery and hydroponic work in the U.S. applicant pool and look for foreign workers to meet these needs. After unsuccessful U.S. recruitment, the employer can gain certification of H-2A visas. Many of Alaska's agricultural employers continue to use word of mouth, placement of job orders in Alaska's online labor exchange system, AlaskaJobs, or other methods of public recruitment to pursue workers.

COVID-19 has been a burden upon Alaskan farmers, just as it has been throughout the state. Initially, when compared to the contiguous 48 states and Hawaii, Alaska seemed to have been more insulated from the effects of the pandemic. During the first round of the USDA CFAP 1 awards to assist agricultural producers during the pandemic, which concluded on September 11, 2020, Alaska only had 18 approved applications. To put this in perspective, Texas had the

most applications with 53,851, while the territory of Guam had 37 approved applications. However, at the end of USDA CFAP 2 program, which concluded on October 12, 2021, Alaska had 133 approved applications, an increase of over 638 percent; clearly, the COVID-19 pandemic was affecting Alaskan agricultural producers.

**Aquaculture Overview:** Regional distribution of aquatic farm products includes 47 percent from Kachemak Bay, 36 percent from Southern Southeast Alaska, 12 percent from Prince William Sound, 4 percent from Northern Southeast Alaska, and 1 percent from Kodiak Island. Shellfish products that are being cultivated and sold in the state include Pacific oyster, blue mussel, and Pacific geoduck. Aquatic plant products being cultivated and then sold are sugar kelp, bullwhip kelp and ribbon kelp from hatchery-reared kelp seed starts.

Although permitting of aquatic farms has been going on since 1989 with oversight from state, federal agencies, and occasionally local municipalities, most aquatic farms in Alaska remain small, and it continues to be a nascent industry. A 2015 status report by Alaska Department of Fish and Game found that the state's 68 aquatic farm operations averaged five acres per farm with a total work force of 161. Two seafood processors have applied for larger operations, which may lead the way to increased private investment and growth in this industry. According to a 2017 study by the MacDowell Group, Alaskan aquaculture has the potential to grow into a \$100 million industry in 20 years, providing growth in a new sector of the economy and resulting economic stability. As of 2021, there were 78 permitted aquatic farm operations in Alaska, an increase of 14.7 percent since 2015.

However, despite the optimism one can gather from the increase in permitting activity, COVID-19 impacts are affecting the Alaskan aquaculture industry. A recent survey from the Alaska Sea Grant, a partnership between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the University of Alaska Fairbanks, found that more than half of respondents had their revenues adversely affected, while nearly half indicated that they had laid off employees due to COVID-19.

**Timber Industry Overview:** Commercial harvests occur on private, Alaska Native Corporation, federal, and state lands, including the Mental Health Trust Authority and University Trust properties. Harvesting and timber processing activities occur throughout the state with distinctly different industry sectors represented in the three main geographic regions: Southeast, Southcentral, and Interior Alaska. Since the 1990s, this sector of the economy has been in decline in Southeast, while activity in Southcentral is cyclic and responds to market demand and price. The industry is now in the bottom of this cycle, so little commercial activity is occurring. The Interior has experienced modest growth in this sector over the same period.

With changes in federal timber management policy in the Tongass National Forest and most second growth forests not at a harvest age, the Southeast region supports a few companies that are mid-sized with the majority being small-owner/operator businesses. Workers in these smaller operations work within the vicinity of their home and do not migrate. In the southern part of Southeast Alaska, a small workforce migrates to Prince of Wales Island to conduct timber harvest for five medium-sized companies. A medium-sized sawmill also processes harvested logs into a variety of products and depends on a local workforce. Due to geographical variables within the forest and timber stands of various ages and natural productivity, there is often the need for remote work sites for operations to occur where the timber is located. Businesses respond with remote bunkhouses, bunkhouses on barges, or other remote camp adaptations, and workers will need to translocate during seasonal operations.

The season varies depending on weather and temperature. Depending on demand, logging can occur year-round. Seasonally, work can begin as soon as March and go through November, while other years the timeframe is shorter. The timber industry is cyclic depending on natural forest growth and demand. Tree pre-commercial thinning activities are constant year-to-year with land managers setting goals of thinning/treating up to 10,000 acres per year.



Interior and Southcentral Alaska utilize a local workforce both in timber harvest and processing activities with occasional need for specific skilled labor from outside the region in the timber harvesting sector. These workers typically come from Pacific Northwest states. Timber harvest often peaks in winter months, due to the use of snow roads and ice bridges to access areas that are inaccessible during the warmer months.

3. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS MEANS SUMMARIZING MIGRANT AND SEASONAL FARM WORKER (MSFW) CHARACTERISTICS (INCLUDING IF THEY ARE PREDOMINANTLY FROM CERTAIN COUNTRIES, WHAT LANGUAGE(S) THEY SPEAK, THE APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF MSFWs IN THE STATE DURING PEAK SEASON AND DURING LOW SEASON, AND WHETHER THEY TEND TO BE MIGRANT, SEASONAL, OR YEAR-ROUND FARMWORKERS). THIS INFORMATION MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT DATA SUPPLIED BY WIOA SECTION 167 NATIONAL FARMWORKER JOBS PROGRAM (NFJP) GRANTEES, OTHER MSFW ORGANIZATIONS, EMPLOYER ORGANIZATIONS, AND STATE AND/OR FEDERAL AGENCY DATA SOURCES SUCH AS THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR (DOL) EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION

The geography and expense of traveling to Alaska limits influx of MSFW with the exception of the timber industry, which often tries to recruit workers from both outside and within Alaska. Within Alaska, few workers travel to participate in various types of agriculture and aquaculture employment that fall under the definition of MSFW.

For the 2020 Federal Program Year, 117 individuals self-identified as MSFW during both the peak and low seasons. According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, 93 percent of producers are white and in discussion with employers, the same demographic appears to be true of employees. Workers hired through H-2A visas migrate from Mexico. Based on discussions with job center staff and employers, most farm work is done by farm owner/operators, with additional work done by employees during the planting and harvests for short, two-week time periods. Temporary workers often reside in an area they can travel to and from on a daily basis.

These English-speaking, white workers are often high school or college students (non-MSFW by definition.) The Alaska Job Center Network staff work with individuals from many ethnic backgrounds and are able to assist job seekers and workers who need language support, including MSFW. In the Mat-Su Valley, Russian is the primary language other than English, while on the Kenai Peninsula Spanish is the second most common language after English. The Anchorage School District has students who speak 110 different languages; among the most common are English, Spanish, Hmong, Samoan, and Filipino.

The forest management industry workers, including planners and silviculturists, loggers, equipment operators, and mill workers, are primarily Caucasian with five to ten percent Alaska Native. Dockworkers who load timber export vessels are predominantly Alaska Native. Tree thinners and planters are almost exclusively migrant workers from Mexico and Central American countries, with the exception of Interior Alaska, where local labor participates in reforestation (planting) activities. These workers are critical to the long-term success of the Alaska timber industry for long-term stand productivity, as the economically harvestable productive old growth stands have been depleted, and the industry transitions to young growth wood products. In the past three years, Alaska has received one H-2B case for 35 forestry worker positions to plant and thin trees.

#### 4. OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Sections A, B, C, D, and E below provide DOLWD's strategies under each heading.

The State Monitor Advocate will utilize the following technology to contact farmworkers not connected with the employment service offices.

1. GovDelivery Listserv to send MSFW an overview of the Alaska Job Center Network locations and brief description of opportunities for education, training, and support services that will prepare those workers for employment in high-demand occupations that will result in steady, full-time, year-round employment. The Listserv has identified MSFW subscribers.
2. GovDelivery Listserv to send MSFW information on high paying jobs, including H-2A (agricultural) and H-2B (non-agricultural) positions.
3. The State Monitor Advocate will travel once a year to Anchorage/Mat-Su, the Kenai Peninsula to provide H-2A housing inspections and train employment services staff to conduct outreach to farmworkers not connected with Alaska's Job Centers. Outreach to MSFW will be increased during the agricultural season at farms and gathering spots such as local churches.

Alaska is a non-significant state, with a part-time SMA, as approved by USDOL Employment & Training Administration Region 6, and utilizes job center employment service staff to conduct outreach. The SMA trains employment services staff on the complaint system, identification and understanding of why MSFW are afforded special rights under the Judge Richey court order, and how to work with customers whose first language is not English, to ensure that equivalent and proportional services are offered to both MSFW and non-MSFW under Wagner-Peyser. The SMA receives guidance and support from the National Monitor Advocate Region 6 Coordinator in addition to guidance from SMAs in other states.

One-stop academies are conducted annually to create awareness of core employment and training programs, including unemployment insurance, for one-stop staff and partners.

Alaska assesses the unique needs of its farmworkers based on past and projected agricultural and farmworker activity in the State and provides professional development opportunities to employment service merit outreach staff upon hire and throughout their tenure to ensure high quality services are provided to jobseekers and employers. Outreach workers are offered professional development courses taught by the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Division of Employment and Training Services. The range of training includes:

- IntraLearn New Hire Modules
- Alaska Foundations of Workforce Professional Certification (Dynamic Institute)
- Apprenticeship Foundation Training (if applicable)
- De-escalation & Workplace Violence
- Disability Resource Coordinator I
- National Veterans Training Institute (NVTI):
  - Day in the Life of Jobs for Veterans State Grant staff in an American Job Center
- State of Alaska, Respectful Workplace
- State of Alaska, Valuing Diversity
- Business Connection/Employer Services
- Career Ready 101/WorkKeys Curriculum
- Career Support and Training Services
- Employment After Incarceration

- Interviewing for Employment
- Introduction to Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
- Resume Writing
- Reemployment & Eligibility Assessment Interview
- Seafood Orientation
- TABE Testing Observation
- Veteran Services
- Workplace Alaska
- WorkKeys Testing

Alaska's employment merit staff outreach workers are also trained throughout the year in the processing and handling of complaints and apparent violations, so that they are able to respond effectively to MSFW, jobseeker, and employer concerns.

Alaska does not have any NFJP grantees, although public and private community service agencies and groups have been identified for coordination of services with employment services staff located in the region where there is MSFW activity. However, due to the small MSFW population (117 self-identified), most of these organizations assist individuals interested in farming with business guidance and marketing support, rather than providing assistance to farmworkers, both migrant and non-migrant.

## 5. SERVICES PROVIDED TO FARMWORKERS AND AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS THROUGH THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM

### **i. How career and training services required under WIOA Title I will be provided to MSFWs through the one-stop centers**

Alaska adheres to the principals of the Judge Richey court order, which states that services to MSFW should be equitable and proportionate to those received by non-MSFW. Alaska acknowledges and prioritizes services to target populations. With the goals of enhancing and improving opportunities for all Alaskans for high skill, high wage jobs and careers by promoting the dignity of work and the value of employment, a full range of employment and training services are provided to both MSFW and non-MSFW to define a clear route to meet career objectives and/or to obtain employment. Initial career services are provided to job seekers by job center resource room staff. Additional training and support through WIOA Title Ib programs are provided by Career Support and Training Services staff, who work with participants to develop comprehensive individual employment plans that identify goals and associated training and support service needs. Additionally, individuals who are English Language Learners and need basic skill development to obtain a GED or enter postsecondary education, or employment are referred and assisted by WIOA Title II Alaska Adult Education program. These programs ensure workers receive the individualized support needed to identify career pathways leading to high-demand occupations that pay family-sustaining wages.

### **ii. How the State serves agricultural employers and how it intends to improve such services**

The job center Business Connection staff assist agricultural employers to find qualified applicants to meet their unique business needs. To ensure quality job seeker referrals, trained Business Connection staff work one on one with employers to understand the worker skill requirements, process job orders and match applications from local, state, and national labor pools. Customized recruitment and hiring events conducted at job centers ensure a professional

atmosphere for employers. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the department has allowed H-2A Employers to perform remote housing inspections, which lessens the need to travel, limits comingling and helps prevent the spread of infection. The State of Alaska has made available to H-2A Employers via its website a wide array of informational resources including guidance from the CDC, USDOL and the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services.

Each Alaska job center has a prominently displayed poster outlining the complaint system. All job center staff are trained in handling both employment service and employment law-related complaints to ensure workers have a safe, non-discriminatory work environment required under federal and state regulations as well as complaint provisions of WIOA Section 188. Training includes the special provisions for MSFW including additional time for information requests, handling employment law-related complaints, and the potential involvement of the SMA in complaint resolutions. The job center manager provides oversight, and the system is under the purview of the Complaint System Coordinator. Additional marketing may be conducted through the DOLWD's social media venues including Facebook posts and Twitter.

Due to the geographical separation between Alaska and the nearest state, Washington, the Agriculture Recruitment System is of limited value to agricultural employers. However, employment service staff explain and offer businesses the opportunity to place job orders in the National Labor Exchange. U.S. DOL lists H-2A and H-2B job orders on the <https://seasonaljobs.dol.gov/> website.

## 6. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

### A. COLLABORATION

The state-appointed part-time SMA works with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, and the DOLWD Research & Analysis Section to identify MSFW and provide services to them. DOLWD also works with those agencies to capture data on agricultural employees and MSFW in the state. The SMA will continue outreach to the 14 Alaska job centers to obtain information on employers and MSFW to expand knowledge of this population to better serve them with outreach and Wagner-Peyser services.

This knowledge will lead to development of creating career pathways in agriculture and aquaculture, especially for target populations. Expanding business opportunities in the state will enhance Alaska's food security and promote multiple pathways for statewide economic stability and job growth.

### B. REVIEW AND PUBLIC COMMENT

In addition to the statewide outreach for public comment on the state plan as a whole, the draft Alaska AOP was sent to the following groups representing appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested organizations on 1/16/20 for 30 days. Alaska does not have any participants in the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP).

#### **Agriculture:**

- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Field Service Local Office
- Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Agriculture
- Matanuska Experimental Farm
- USDA Farm Service Agency

#### **Aquaculture:**

- Aquaculture Section/Commercial Fisheries Division/Alaska Fish and Game (ADFG)

- Department of Natural Resources, Aquatic Farm Program
- Department of Environmental Conservation Seafood Program
- Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation
- Alaska Sea Grant
- Alaska Shellfish Growers Association

**Forestry:**

- Alaska Division of Forestry
- U.S. Forest Service, Northern Southeast Alaska Region
- U.S. Forest Service, Southern Southeast Alaska Region

**Other vested organizations:**

- Alaska Institute for Justice
- Alaska Legal Services

**C. DATA ASSESSMENT**

With the revision of the labor exchange profile in early 2019, Alaska has an accurate MSFW count. Since that time, Alaska has met or exceeded federal compliance goals to provide both quantitative and equivalent services to MSFW in proportion to non-MSFW.

**D. ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS**

Alaska met the expectations listed in the July 2017 to June 2020, AOP including increasing awareness of the agriculture, aquaculture, and timber industries and redefining the labor exchange profile to accurately identify MSFWs. The state developed training for staff on both working with English Language Learners and the Employment Service Complaint System, which included information on identifying MSFWs.

**E. STATE MONITOR ADVOCATE**

The State Monitor Advocate reviewed and approved the AOP, which covers the period from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2023.

**WAGNER-PEYSER ASSURANCES**

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service is co-located with one-stop centers or a plan and timeline has been developed to comply with this requirement within a reasonable amount of time (sec 121(e)(3));	Yes
2. If the State has significant MSFW one-stop centers, the State agency is complying with the requirements under 20 CFR 653.111, State Workforce Agency staffing requirements;	Yes
3. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser Act services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I; and	
4. SWA officials: 1) Initiate the discontinuation of services; 2) Make the determination that services need to be discontinued; 3) Make the determination to reinstate services after the services have been discontinued; 4) Approve corrective action plans; 5) Approve the removal of an employer's clearance orders from interstate or intrastate clearance if the employer was granted conditional access to ARS and did not come into compliance within 5 calendar days; 6) Enter into agreements with State and Federal enforcement agencies for enforcement-agency staff to conduct field checks on the SWAs' behalf (if the SWA so chooses); and 7) Decide whether to consent to the withdrawal of complaints if a party who requested a hearing wishes to withdraw its request for hearing in writing before the hearing.	Yes

**WAGNER PEYSER PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

Performance Indicators	PY 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2023 Expected Level	PY 2023 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	59.0%	60.0%	60.0%	60.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	58.0%	59.0%	59.0%	59.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$6,000.00	\$6,500.00	\$6,400.00	\$6,500.00
Credential Attainment Rate	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Measurable Skill Gains	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

*“Effectiveness in Serving Employers” is still being developed and this data will not be entered in the 2022 State Plan modifications.*

## PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAMS

### A. ALIGNING OF CONTENT STANDARDS

The Alaska Adult Education (AAE) Program has adopted and implemented national College and Career Readiness (CCR) standards designed for WIOA Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy. Alaska adopted and disseminated these standards following the 2016 adoption by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE).

#### **Adult Education Standards**

- In 2012, the Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development adopted new K–12 academic standards for the content areas of English Language Arts and Mathematics. These subject areas are not scheduled to be updated again until 2025. In 2019, new Science standards were adopted, including Computer Science. These standards are not scheduled to be updated again until 2032. Social Studies, including History, Civics, Government, and Citizenship, were last adopted in 2006 and revised in 2016. The Social Studies standards are scheduled for update in 2023. The Department of Education & Early Development will begin the process to update these standard beginning in the fall of 2021. The Alaska K-12 academic standards reflect the growing need to prepare students for postsecondary education and careers. The AAE office will continue to watch for updates to the standards and determine if state specific adjustments to the CCR standards are needed to align with any changes to the Alaska K-12 academic standards.
- The AAE office reviewed the CCR standards to ensure alignment with Alaska’s K-12 standards. After a comprehensive review and research process, it was determined CCR standards provide benchmark alignment with the national standards and provide standardized academic content. State specific standards will be more appropriate for Alaska, and the AAE Office will be working with a vendor to write standards that better align with Alaska’s K-12 standards. State specific standards will also allow Alaska to focus on advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging within our unique students’ cultural diversity.
- The establishment of standards has increased the complexity of skill development in areas such as reading comprehension and mathematical computation. The CCR standards are used to prepare students for the rigor of college level classes, technical training programs, entry into employment, and citizenship classes. Eligible providers implemented standards beginning in 2017. Professional development has been interwoven into past and present conferences and monitoring to ensure CCR standards are being consistently.
- The CCR standards used by AAE’s regional programs scaffold student learning, building common knowledge, and explore workforce development skills. The standardization of content has allowed programs to understand common foundational knowledge and build learning communities.

Since the implementation of distance education in program year (PY) 2021, Alaska continues to allow adult education programs to target skills for the necessary alignment of CCR standards to synchronous and asynchronous learning activities. The ever-changing landscape of instructional methodology that has evolved since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the importance of interactions with students in distance learning environments. Programs will continue to be effectively trained in effective implementation of CCR standards as related to distance education.

## B. LOCAL ACTIVITIES

### ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY ACTIVITIES (SECTION 203 OF WIOA)

The Alaska Adult Education (AAE) program is a statewide instructional program that provides formal education for adults over the age of sixteen (16) seeking to enhance their postsecondary education skills to transition into employment. The AAE Program has been an institution in Alaska for over 45 years. Housed within the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD), Division of Employment and Training Services (DETS), the AAE office provides grant management for Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) funds. The AAE Office is responsible for the administration and programmatic oversight of AEFLA funding distribution to eligible providers to offer adult education and literacy activities that fall within the scope of services required under state and federal regulations, policies, and laws. Due to limited funding, AAE programs rely heavily on partnerships and obtaining smaller grants that support the local adult education programs to successfully provide students the educational advantages they need.

The mission of the AAE Program is to provide adult learners the skills needed to prepare them for employment, vocational training, or postsecondary education in order to assist:

- adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skill necessary for employment and economic self-sufficiency;
- adults who are parents or family members to obtain education and skills necessary to become full partners in the educational development of their children and lead to sustainable improvements in economic opportunities for their family;
- adults in attaining secondary school diploma and in the transition to postsecondary education and training including career pathways; or
- immigrants and other individuals who are English language learners in improving their English reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension skills, mathematics skills, and acquiring an understanding of the American system of government, individual freedom, and the responsibilities of citizenship.

#### **Eligible Providers**

An applicant for AEFLA funding must be considered an eligible provider to be a recipient of adult education funds. According to federal definition, an “eligible provider” is an organization that has demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult education and literacy activities. Eligible providers may include, but are not limited to:

- local educational agency;
- community-based organization or faith-based organization;
- volunteer literacy organization;
- institution of higher education;
- public or private nonprofit agency;
- library;
- public housing authority;
- nonprofit institution that is not described in any of paragraphs (a) through (g) of this section and can provide adult education and literacy activities to eligible individuals;



- consortium or coalition of the agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described in any of paragraphs (a) through (h) of this section; and
- partnership between an employer and an entity described in any of paragraphs (a) through (i) of this section. (WIOA, Title II, Section 203[5]; 34 CFR 463.23)

### **Request for Grant Application (RGA) Process**

The request for grant application (RGA) process establishes a mechanism for the AAE office to determine suitable eligible providers of grant funds based on federal and state mandates and policies. DOLWD awards multi-year federal and state grant funding to regional eligible providers to support the delivery of adult education activities.

The AAE office ensures direct and equitable access of AEFLA funds by continuing to conduct a competitive process that provides nondiscriminatory access. Grant publications are made available to a broad range of potential applications through expansion of outreach. The AAE office utilizes traditional and non-traditional publications, such as websites, public notices, email blasts, and social media to inform current and potential eligible providers of the process. Technical assistance is provided to assist the grant applicants during the process. Frequently asked questions are compiled and posted on the AAE website. Organizations not previously funded are given fair and equitable opportunity to apply for funding without hindrance.

In accordance with the U.S. Department of Education Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) Program Memorandums 20-3, the AAE Office extended the PY2017 grants into a fourth year due to the broad impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The interruption to the PY2020 RGA allowed the AAE office to assess the program delivery system and redesign the RGA. In PY2021, Alaska awarded new competitive, four-year AEFLA grants to fourteen (14) eligible providers of adult education. The AAE office ensures, through the RGA process, regional adult education programs, Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) grant, and Department of Corrections (DOC) programs are represented throughout the geographic regions of Alaska.

Funding amounts are based on the following criteria:

- The Alaska Department of Education's Area Cost Factor Differentials, used for the state's distribution to public school districts;
- Census area information provided from the American Community Survey; and
- Total population based on region;

Continuing grants are also funded based on:

- Program performance during previous grant cycle; and
- Maintained compliance with programmatic, state, and federal policies and regulations.

In addition to regional and basic information, the AAE RGA requires regional program applicants to describe their intended scope of work related to adult education and literacy activities. Applicants are required to submit their location and regional outreach plan, proposed budget, and agency policies and programmatic information related to grant management. In addition, applicants are required to outline their capacity for instituting the thirteen considerations identified in Section 231 and other expectations as mandated in state and federal statute and regulations. Additionally, substantial consideration is given to programs who integrate the following into their application:

- Innovation in adult education practices or supportive activities that facilitate knowledge and skill development, secondary credential attainment, postsecondary credential attainment, and/or employment.

- Ability to describe intention to provide concurrent and contextual integrated education and training (IET). The service approach must detail the requirements and definitions set forth in 34 CFR § 463.37 and outline the overlap in services between adult education and literacy activities, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training.

Among the thirteen (13) considerations, programs must describe their ability to incorporate effective use of technology and distance education learning. Technology is not limited to the classroom, and distance learning can facilitate an interaction between the teacher and student that helps to eliminate barriers the student may be facing. Programs must have the ability to provide synchronous and asynchronous program delivery throughout the grant period.

Eligible providers are mandated to describe their curriculum and instructional materials in their RGA. Curricula must align with current Alaska adopted CCR standards.

Annual grant applications are required for subsequent funding, and renewals are contingent on the grantee's ability to successfully implement the terms and conditions of the grant, meet performance expectations, and provide quality regional adult education and literacy activities. Each grantee is required to submit a one-year renewal application at the start of the fiscal year. Grantees must revise program and contact information, projected budget narrative, job descriptions for all position funded under the grant, and program income rationale, if applicable. The renewal application also requires programs to outline steps taken to ensure equal access to education compliance with the principles of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA). Finally, grantees are mandated to inform the AAE office of any proposed change in service or negotiated administrative limitations, and they must re-sign program assurances and grant terms and conditions.

### **Alaska Adult Education Activities (Section 203)**

Eligible providers receiving state and/or federal funding for the delivery of AEFLA activities are required to provide the following, as mandated by the State of Alaska Adult Education Program Office: adult education and literacy activities, English language acquisition activities, and workplace adult education and literacy. Providers may provide the following optional services throughout the grant period: family literacy activities, integrated English literacy and civics education, workforce preparation activities, and Integrated education and training. Eligible providers receiving WIOA Title II state and/or federal funding will follow the Alaska Adult Education Assessment & Technical Assistance Manual with outlined policies related to enrollment, assessment, instruction, professional development, test taking, programmatic responsibility, and other policies as incorporated.

Alaska recognizes the ever-present need for digital literacy skills within adult learning programs. Beginning with PY2022, the state will require eligible providers to institute digital literacy activities to enable adult learners to succeed in workforce and academic settings. Alaska adult education providers will integrate technology into instruction, including utilizing information and communication to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information in a digital capacity. Programs will also use College and Career Readiness Standards to increase students' access to technology and, where applicable, leverage technology for innovative and personalized instruction and increasing access to internet and devices for students and families.

AAE regional programs will be awarded according to their capacity to conduct adult education and literacy activities defined as:

- Adult education as defined in Alaska as academic instruction below postsecondary education to assist adults in obtaining skills needed, including reading, writing, math, English language proficiency, and problem-solving, for the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, obtaining economic self-sufficiency employment, and/or transition to postsecondary education or training.

- Literacy as defined in Alaska as an individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English, compute, and solve problems, at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family of the individual, and in society.
- Workplace adult education and literacy activities as defined in Alaska adult education and literacy activities offered by an eligible provider in collaboration with an employer or employee organization at a workplace or an off-site location that is designed to improve the productivity of the workforce.
- Family literacy activities as defined in Alaska as activities of sufficient intensity and quality to make sustainable improvements in the economic prospects for a family and that better enable parents or family members to support their children's learning needs, and that integrate all of the following activities:
  - parent or family adult education and literacy activities that lead to readiness for postsecondary education or training, career advancement, and economic self-sufficiency;
  - interactive literacy activities between parents or family members and their children;
  - training for parents or family members regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children; and
  - an age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences.
  - Family literacy activities may be offered with approval by the AAE Office.
- English language acquisition as defined in Alaska as the process by which English learners and immigrant students attain English proficiency and achieve academic success. English language acquisition activities may vary depending on population served.
- Integrated English literacy and civics education (IELCE) as defined in Alaska as education services provided to English language learners under Title II section 231 of WIOA who are adults, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries, that enable such adults to achieve competency in the English language and acquire the basic and more advanced skills needed to function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens in the United States. Such services shall include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition, instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation and may include workforce training. Workforce preparation activities as defined in Alaska as activities, programs, or services designed to help an individual acquire a combination of basic academic skills, critical-thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and self-management skills, including competencies in utilizing resources, using information, working with others, understanding systems, and obtaining skills necessary for successful transition into and completion of postsecondary education or training, or employment.
- Integrated education and training (IET) as defined in Alaska as a service approach that provides adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement. The IET must include adult education and literacy activities, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster.

- Digital Literacy (state imposed) as defined in Alaska as the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills.

### **Special Funding Rule**

The AAE office will not award grant funding for adult education and literacy activities for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of sixteen and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under state law. Programs may use AEFLA funds for individuals under the age of sixteen if providing programs, services, or activities related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, the AAE office shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

### **C. CORRECTIONS EDUCATION AND OTHER EDUCATION OF INSTITUTIONALIZED INDIVIDUALS**

Using the criteria outlined in the Request for Grant Application (RGA) process above, Alaska Adult Education (AAE) will award Section 225 grant funds for correctional education and other institutionalized individuals. A competitive, multi-year grant cycle is required, and eligible providers will be subject to the same considerations as adult education regional grants.

Alaska issues one RGA for all Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) funded grants, which will serve AAE students in Alaska Correctional Centers. No more than 20 percent of the 82.5 percent of the state grant allotted is awarded statewide to service correctional education and institutionalized individuals. Historically, due to limited funding, the Alaska Department of Corrections (DOC) has partnered with AAE to offer educational services in all fourteen (14) state correctional facilities.

The corrections narrative will focus on how adult education and literacy activities will be delivered throughout an integrated correctional system or within Alaska correctional institutions. The term correctional institution refers to prison; jail; reformatory; work farm; detention center; halfway house, community-based rehabilitation center; or any other similar institution designed for the confinement or rehabilitation of criminal offenders.

Priorities for AAE students in correctional centers are increasing the number of incarcerated adults completing the Tests of General Education Development (GED®) and increasing the number transitioning into the postsecondary education and training provided in the various individual correctional centers. Non-AEFLA funded programs in the correctional centers address other academic programs listed below. In some cases, AAE teachers may concurrently teach basic reading, writing, math, and ESL to students participating in one of the other programs.

The funds shall be used for the cost of educational programs for criminal offenders in correctional institutions, and for other institutionalized individuals, including academic programs for—adult education and literacy activities; special education, as determined by the eligible agency; secondary school credit, GED® testing preparation; integrated education and training (IET); career pathways; concurrent enrollment; peer tutoring; and transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism.

Eligible providers receiving funding under WIOA Section 225 will give priority of service to individuals likely to leave a correctional institution within five (5) years of participation in the program. Correctional and institutionalized individuals will be given an opportunity to develop adult education and literacy skills for successful integration into society upon their release.

In addition to reporting required by the Adult Education Office, the grantee receiving funding under this section to service correctional education and institutionalized individuals will

prepare and submit an annual progress report. The annual report will consist of, but is not limited to, activities carried out under this section; rate of recidivism; enrollment information; educational gains, including high school equivalency outcomes; and employment outcomes.

#### D. INTEGRATED ENGLISH LITERACY AND CIVICS EDUCATION PROGRAM

According to the guidelines outlined in Section 243, Alaska's Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) program receives funding to prepare adults who are English language learners for employment and assist in the transition to unsubsidized employment in an in-demand occupation that will lead to economic self-sufficiency. One IECLE grant is funded to provide statewide supports and activities related to Section 243. The Alaska Adult Education (AAE) program who receives IELCE funding is required to work with the local workforce development system to carry out the activities of the program. The grant application must clearly establish a detailed description of supports and services available for the integration of concurrent and contextual English language acquisition activities and civics education.

The IELCE program must provide education services to English language learners, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries, to enable them to achieve competency in the English language. Instruction is designed to assist with the acquisition of basic and more advanced skills needed to function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens in the United States. Alaska requires instruction in literacy and English language acquisition, the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, civic participation, and workforce training.

The eligible provider receiving funds through the IELCE program must provide services that:

- Include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition and instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation; and
- Are designed to:
  - Prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency; and
  - Integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program.

Alaska issues one IELCE RGA for Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) funded grants. Eligible providers wishing to incorporate IELCE services must demonstrate an ability to deliver services to assist English language learners and immigrants:

- To become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and economic self-sufficiency;
- Who are parents or family members, to obtain the education and skills that are necessary to becoming full partners in the educational development of their children and lead to sustainable improvements in the economic opportunities for their family;
- In attaining a secondary school diploma or equivalent and in the transition to postsecondary education and training, including through career pathways;
- Improving their reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension skills in English and mathematics skills; and
- Acquiring an understanding of the American system of government, individual freedom, and the responsibilities of citizenship.

Eligible providers are also required to demonstrate the method by which they will incorporate integrated education and training activities.

Eligible providers are required to design a program that integrates with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program. Co-enrollment in Alaska is designed for the student to receive services concurrently to build supportive services and wrap-around case management for the student's benefit. Partnering with the Alaska Job Center Network (AJCN), Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), and Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), for example, enables the IELCE program to develop stronger career advancement opportunities within their community. English language learners can access services such as career counseling, job placement, training opportunities, and apprenticeships. Teachers work with the AJCN to develop a plan for employment and economic stability.

As part of the Alaska workforce development system, and to meet the needs of ESL learners, the IELCE program is required to provide Integrated Education and Training (IET) courses concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training as outlined in 34 CFR Part 463 Subpart D. During the RGA process, eligible providers seeking IELCE funds must identify occupational clusters in Alaska and the potential for growth in these occupations. Utilization of this data and partnering with workforce development services will provide students career pathways and employability skills while building on their English proficiency. The IELCE program will work with the AJCN, employers, and Alaska apprenticeship programs to build curriculum to support ELL students. Additionally, eligible providers seeking and receiving IELCE funding will be required to provide general information regarding their program to the AAE office. Program information will need to be kept up to date and submitted with the RGA and additional grant awards. Information must include the following:

- Courses offered, including objectives and schedule of when available;
- Attendance requirements and program income fee structure, if applicable;
- Description of the integration of the components of the IET program and partnerships created to build successful career pathways, including:
  - ESL activities;
  - Workforce preparation activities; and
  - Workforce training;
- Identified postsecondary education or credentialing opportunities available to participants, ways to access them, and organizations who administer them.

The AAE office will continue to provide technical assistance and professional development to support efforts administered under Section 243.

In addition to reporting required by the Adult Education Office, the grantee receiving funding under this section to service English language learners for employment and assist in the transition to unsubsidized employment in an in-demand occupation that will lead to economic self-sufficiency will prepare and submit an annual progress report. The annual report will consist of, but is not limited to, activities carried out under this section; enrollment information; educational gains, including high school equivalency outcomes; IET activities; and employment outcomes.

#### E. STATE LEADERSHIP

##### 1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT THE REQUIRED STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA

Alaska Adult Education (AAE) utilizes State Leadership funds to enhance existing programming and develop innovative programming to prepare students for transition into postsecondary

education, employment, or training. No more than 12.5 percent of the total adult education grant funds will be expended to carry out required and allowable activities as directed in Section 223 of WIOA. State Leadership funds are only calculated from adult education funding, this excludes funds explicitly set aside for Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) activities.

### **Alignment of Adult Education and Literacy Activities**

The alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other core programs and one-stop partners, including eligible providers, including the development of career pathways to provide access to employment and training services for individuals in adult education and literacy activities.

The AAE program is housed in the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. The integration of all WIOA titles under one department has enriched partnership and provided a deeper comprehension of each title. Local providers and state representatives can align adult education and literacy with other WIOA core programs, including the Alaska Job Center Network (AJCN).

Through aligning adult education with core partners, Alaska has integrated career pathways with student learning. This model includes adult education as a vital entry point for Alaskans seeking to improve their basic academic skills. Alaska will continue to identify career pathway opportunities, professional development activities, and best practice approaches to increase career pathways for students that lead to sustainable employment.

At the state level, collaboration with senior management plays a vital role in alignment of core partners. The AAE office participates in WIOA strategic planning, division meetings, and WIOA specific meetings to work in partnership on building a common career pathway vision. The AAE office provides professional development to key stakeholders on Title II-specific approaches, promising practices, and the integration of adult education into the workforce system. Furthermore, these meetings provide contextual knowledge of core partners to build professional development for regional programs related to topic such as in-demand jobs, available supports and services, regional contacts, and current employment trends.

AAE continues to align adult education with WIOA partners through the integration of a single log-on management system. Grantees are able to access information, reports, and student information quickly and easily. Programmers are modifying the adult education section to match state specific needs. The system integration allows Alaska to continue its collaboration efforts.

AAE providers will continue to build Integrate Education and Training (IET) programs throughout Alaska. To meet the required three components, programs will work collaboratively with partners to provide concurrent and contextual services within the overall scope of a particular well-planned IET program. Local programs will provide adult education and literacy activities in alignment with College and Career Readiness Standards. Programs will collaborate with local one-stops, employers, universities, and apprenticeships to provide the workforce preparation activities and workforce training components. The overall scope of each IET will provide sufficient intensity and quality and will be based on the most rigorous research available, particularly with respect to improving reading, writing, mathematics, and English proficiency of eligible individuals, will occur simultaneously, and will use occupationally-relevant instructional materials.

### **Professional Development**

Alaska has an established and ever-growing professional development system that ensures training for all staff, including Program Coordinators, data entry clerks, teachers, and support personnel is relevant to the growth of adult education. The Alaska Adult Education (AAE) Office

works with programs to establish high-quality professional development programming, including the improvement of instructional practices, incorporating essential components of basic skill development, foundational support for data entry and outcome-based reporting, enrichment of instruction provided by volunteers or by personnel of the state or outlying area, and dissemination of information about models and promising practices related to such programs.

Alaska will continue to hold two annual meetings where staff from AAE programs receive training. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the AAE Office has switched to a hybrid model to meet the needs of adult education staff. Though born out of necessity, the integration of a hybrid meeting solution has had a positive impact on adult education programs. Some programs struggle to attend meetings due to inclement weather, transportation issues, and minimum grant funding. This hybrid solution has added the ability for more staff to attend professional development opportunities. The AAE Office will continue to host in-person mandatory meetings in Anchorage to foster collaboration for programs. Adult education staff will have an opportunity to participate in a statewide conference highlighting best practices and Alaska-specific needs. The AAE office will partner with the Alaska Adult Education Association to help coordinate the conference. The second meeting will be held for AAE management and program coordinators. These meetings will focus on the dissemination of information about models and proven promising practices in overseeing regional programs.

Alaska will increase professional development through state and federal specific trainings. The AAE office will be focused on providing improved on instruction, establishment of career pathways, and expansion of Integrated Education and Training programs. Currently, teachers are participating in trainings offered by several entities including Center for Applied Linguistics, Data Recognition Cooperation (DRC), Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS), General Educational Development (GED) Testing Services, Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS), and the Alaska Career Information System (ACIS).

### **Technical Assistance**

The provision of technical assistance to eligible providers of adult education and literacy activities receiving funds under this title, including the development and dissemination of instructional and programmatic practices; the role of eligible providers as a one-stop partner; and assistance in the use of technology.

Technical assistance is available to eligible providers to effectively enhance their program and fulfill the grant requirements. Technical assistance is initiated by the eligible provider; findings associated with monitoring or evaluations; or information distributed from state or federal programs. Monthly meetings with the regional programs have been established to disseminate instructional and programmatic information through the Program Coordinators.

Technical assistance topics include the following:

- Data management
- National Reporting System requirements
- Recruitment and intake
- Testing requirements and policies
- Updated federal and state policies
- Career pathways and transitioning to postsecondary education
- Use of technology



Providing technical assistance to the local programs is an ongoing activity. Assistance is provided through professional development presentations; webinar; phone assistance; teleconferences; onsite trainings; conferences; and one-on-one counseling. Technical assistance has been changed to include having a hybrid model available for all in-person mandatory meetings. Technical assistance will be provided until no longer required.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The monitoring and evaluation of the quality of, and the improvement in, adult education and literacy activities and the dissemination of information about models and proven or promising practices within the State.

Monitoring procedures are thorough and well established in adult education. AAE will continue to monitor sites using a formal monitoring procedure. In addition, programs' statistics are monitored on a regular basis, and desk audits of student records are conducted. AAE will continue to provide data monitoring, onsite visits and reviews, and desk monitors.

Quality improvement and monitoring goals:

- **Monitoring Schedules:** The AAE office will create a monitoring schedule at the beginning of each fiscal year to assess onsite visits and reviews; desk monitoring and data reviews; and self-assessment checks.
- **Onsite Visits and Review:** The AAE office will work with the program onsite review protocols. Evaluators will observe classroom instruction, tour the facility, interview staff, and monitor files. Onsite reviews will also consist of programmatic and/or financial monitoring. Monitoring will include assessment of instruction, instructional materials, and College and Career Readiness (CCR) Standards; evaluation of policies and procedures; quality of program administration; review of overall adherence to grant requirements; and financial data audit.
- **Pre-Award Risk Analysis Questionnaire:** The AAE Office requires programs to fill out a Pre-Award Risk Analysis Questionnaire prior to award of a grant [2 CFR 200.331(b)]. The risk analysis questionnaire requires programs to provide programmatic and financial documentation related to internal controls of the organization. The questionnaire and required documentation are analyzed to determine if the organization has the responsibility of programmatic decision-making and therefore able to adhere to the state and federal rules and regulations.
- **Desk Monitor and File Review:** The AAE office will work with programs to review data entered into the management information system (MIS) to promote program improvement. Desk monitoring and file review will consist of a quarterly review of data collected from students, teachers, and program information.
- **Program Desk Monitoring Tool (DMT):** Quarterly, Program Coordinators will complete a DMT. Based on their ratings, technical assistance or professional development will be provided. DMTs will not trigger an onsite or desk monitor. The assessment is used to help programs with performance and self-awareness and to guide state decisions for assistance.
- **Negotiated Performance Indicators (NPI):** The AAE office will negotiate annual performance targets with grantees at the beginning of each program year. Grantees will be required to provide a plan to meet or exceed the state performance targets. Programs that do not meet or exceed their targets for the program year may be placed on a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) and grant renewal funding may be affected.

## **2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT PERMISSIBLE STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA, IF APPLICABLE**

## **Other Permissible State Leadership Activities**

Other examples of potential leadership activities that are permissible include development and implementation of technology applications and assisting eligible providers in developing and implementing programs that achieve the objectives of Title II.

The AAE office reserves the right to utilize funding available under WIOA section 222(a)(2) for other permissible State leadership activities outlined in section 223, such as: the support of state or regional networks of literacy resource centers; the development and implementation of technology applications; the development and dissemination of curricula, including curricula incorporating the essential components of reading instruction; the development of content and models for integrated education and training and career pathways; integration of literacy and English language instruction with occupational skill training; activities to promote workplace adult education and literacy activities; or the development and piloting of strategies for improving teacher quality and retention.

## **F. ASSESSING QUALITY**

The Alaska Adult Education (AAE) office will assess the quality of each eligible provider based on their individual goals and outcomes provided in the Request for Grant Application (RGA).

### **Monitoring**

Desk Monitoring and File Review: The completeness and quality of student data submitted by programs will be assessed through ongoing desk monitoring and file review. Quarterly desk monitoring and file review is used for program accountability, identifying anomalies, program improvement, professional development, and informing change. The state AAE office will randomly select samples of student data from the management information system (MIS) to review for accuracy and completeness. Desk monitoring and file reviews will consist of a review of data collected from students, teachers, and program information in alignment with their hard copy files. Each data element will be marked as Passed, Missing Information, Data Not Matched, or N/A, as appropriate. Missing and erroneous data identified during the review process must be corrected and documented within 30 days of identification.

Onsite Visits and Review: Each year, at least 20 percent of programs will be selected to receive an onsite visit and review. A formal review schedule is set at the beginning of the fiscal year. The AAE office will work with the program onsite review protocols. Evaluators will observe classroom instruction, tour the facility, talk with stakeholders, and interview program staff and Coordinators. Onsite reviews will also consist of programmatic and/or financial monitoring. Monitoring will include assessment of instruction, instructional materials, and College and Career Readiness Standards; evaluation of policies and procedures; quality of program administration; review of overall adherence to grant requirements; and financial data audit.

Financial Review: The comprehensiveness of financial data will be reviewed upon request for payment reimbursement. Expenditure reports and backup documentation must be complete and thorough. In conjunction with onsite monitoring, financial data audits may be completed at the same time.

Program Desk Monitoring Tool (DMT): Quarterly, Program Coordinators will complete a DMT. Data collected from these tools will be used to drive technical assistance or professional development. DMTs will not trigger an onsite or desk monitor. The DMT is used to help programs with performance, self-awareness, and to guide state decisions for assistance.

Negotiated Performance Indicators (NPI): The AAE office will negotiate annual performance targets with grantees at the beginning of each program year. Grantees will be required to provide a plan to meet or exceed the state performance targets. Programs that do not meet or

exceed their targets for the program year may be placed on a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) and grant renewal funding may be affected.

Statistical Data Review: In addition to more formal monitoring, the AAE office will determine the quality of eligible providers' recruitment and retention processes. Statistical data will be collected throughout the year by gathering statistical data from the MIS system. Statistical data will help the AAE office determine monitoring or technical assistance needs or observed for best practices in teaching.

Recruitment and Partnership Evaluation: Eligible providers are also monitored on recruitment activities and partnerships based on the overall success of their program and alignment with the outcomes provided in their RSA. Types of local partnerships developed (e.g., One-Stop Centers, career and technical education training centers, Health and Human Services offices) to facilitate successful transition into postsecondary education, training, or employment are examined. Recruitment activities are also observed and have the possibility of triggering a technical assistance plan.

### **Professional Development**

Intake and Orientation: Effectiveness of Regional Programs' intake and orientation processes will be evaluated by the AAE Office during desk monitoring and onsite reviews. Attendance data will be used to determine the percentage of students who attend 12 or fewer hours.

Assessment and Placement Protocol: Timeliness of the administration of the TABE, CASAS, and/or BEST pre-test assessments as measured by the test date compared to the intake form date. The AAE Office will review the processes used by AAE programs in orientation and placement in a review of the AAE Desk Monitoring Tools, and through observations and interviews that are conducted during site visits. Professional development and technical assistance will be planned based on the findings.

Instruction: Benefits of instruction to the student will be assessed during a review of students' average attendance, post-test rate, educational functional level gain, and GED® completion during site visits, desk monitoring, and/or interviews with programs. Furthermore, postsecondary education outcomes and job attainment or advancement will be assessed annually based on National Reporting System (NRS) data. Observation of instruction and review of program materials during site visits will be noted during onsite visit tours, interviews, and material review. The AAE office will also assess the quality of professional development programs designed by eligible providers and presenters to improve instruction in the essential components of reading instruction; specific needs of adult learners; volunteers or paid personnel; and dissemination of information about models and promising practices.

Annual Conference and Program Coordinator Training: Alaska will continue to hold two annual meetings in Anchorage where staff will receive training. The annual conference will be open to adult education staff and will highlight best practices, instructional requirements, and Alaska-specific needs. The second meeting will be held for AAE management and program coordinators. These meetings will focus on the dissemination of information about models and proven promising practices in overseeing regional programs. The management team meetings will allow for networking and focus on holistic program change.

New Program Coordinator Training: This training will target new Program Coordinators and will focus on federal and state policies, the NRS tables and data collection, and resources needed to run effective programs. This training will take place annually in Anchorage in conjunction with the Program Coordinator training.

### **Improvement of Program**

Based on monitoring, data review, and observations the AAE office will determine the course of action needed to address programmatic deficiencies.

Monthly Program Coordinator Teleconference: To maintenance program improvements, the AAE Office will continue monthly technical assistance teleconference with Regional Program Coordinators to inform them of program changes, deliver training opportunities, and provide question and answer sessions.

Announcement Emails: To keep programs up to date with information from the AAE Office, announcement emails are sent out to Program Coordinators and staff. Announcements keep the team abreast of changes that may need to happen quickly. The announcements are also used as another media for providing technical assistance to the group as a whole.

Corrective Action Plan (CAP): If non-compliance issues are identified, a CAP may be warranted. CAPs identify issues that need to be resolved and timelines for compliancy. CAPs are issued for programs that are not in compliance with state and/or federal regulations. Failure to comply or improve findings may result in additional monitoring, decline in grant funding, removal from grant, or exclusion from future grant solicitations. A final monitoring report will be issued.

Suspension or Termination: If an eligible provider violates or fails to comply with the terms and conditions of the grant agreement and they are in noncompliance with the CAP, suspension or termination may be possible. Eligible providers must be unable to substantiate full compliance and pursue other remedies that are legally available. Eligible providers who are facing suspension or termination of the grant in whole or in part will be notify fifteen (15) calendar days prior to the action.

Program Improvement Plan: To support ongoing program improvement, program operations, and student outcomes, the AAE Office review process continually identifies matters needing attention or improvement. Based on the results of the findings, AAE programs will be given an audit report and low-performing programs will be asked to submit a program improvement plan.

#### ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM CERTIFICATIONS

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The plan is submitted by the State agency that is eligible to submit the plan;	Yes
2. The State agency has authority under State law to perform the functions of the State under the program;	Yes
3. The State legally may carry out each provision of the plan;	Yes
4. All provisions of the plan are consistent with State law;	Yes
5. A State officer, specified by title in the certification, has authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the plan;	Yes
6. The State officer who is submitting the plan, specified by the title in the certification, has authority to submit the plan;	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
7. The agency that is submitting the plan has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan; and	Yes
8. The plan is the basis for State operation and administration of the program;	Yes

**ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM ASSURANCES**

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The eligible agency will expend funds appropriated to carry out title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) only in a manner consistent with fiscal requirements under section 241(a) of WIOA (regarding the supplement-not-supplant requirement);	Yes
2. The eligible agency will ensure that there is at least one eligible provider serving each local area, as defined in section 3(32) of WIOA;	Yes
3. The eligible agency will not use any funds made available under title II of WIOA for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are not "eligible individuals" within the meaning of section 203(4) of WIOA, unless it is providing programs, services or activities related to family literacy activities, as defined in section 203(9) of WIOA;	Yes
4. Using funds made available under title II of WIOA to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution, the eligible agency will give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.	Yes
5. The eligible agency agrees that in expending funds made available under Title II of WIOA, the eligible agency will comply with sections 8301 through 8303 of the Buy American Act (41 U.S.C. 8301-8303).	Yes

**AUTHORIZING OR CERTIFYING REPRESENTATIVE**

<b>APPLICANT'S ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>Enter information in this column</b>
Applicant's Organization	Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development
<b>PRINTED NAME AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE</b>	<b>Enter information in this column</b>

<b>APPLICANT'S ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>Enter information in this column</b>
First Name	Dr. Tamika L.
Last Name	Ledbetter
Title	Commissioner
Email	Commissioner.Labor@Alaska.Gov

#### SECTION 427 OF THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROVISIONS ACT (GEPA)

The State of Alaska, as an employer and service provider, recognizes the need to respect and treat equally all people it hires and serves. The State of Alaska's concept of diversity is broad, extending beyond those categories formally recognized and protected by law. The State Alaska Adult Education (AAE) Office, funded in whole or in part by Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) administrative and leadership funding, complies with all federal and state laws, regulations, and policies pertaining to state and local program staff to continue to work in a positive environment that is free from discrimination based on gender, race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, marital status, changes in marital status, pregnancy, and parenthood.

The Department of Labor and Workforce Development ensures equal opportunity for students, teachers, and eligible providers that participate in any project or program administered through the AAE Office. All grantees funded, either in whole or part, through AEFLA monies are required to comply with General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) section 427. Eligible providers are required to comply with Federal statutes and regulations on nondiscrimination outlined in 34 CFR § 76.500.

Alaska issues one Request for Grant Applications (RGA) for all AEFLA funded grants. The RGA includes information regarding the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) program and providing adult education services to correctional centers. Notice of availability of funds for Title II is published on the State of Alaska Public On-line Notice System and the Alaska Adult Education website to ensure equal access to application information. Parties who wish to receive notification of grant information via email, may register for GovDelivery notification on grant and procurement opportunities.

As part of the initial RGA process and annual renewal application, eligible providers must complete a form indicating in what manner the program complies with General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) section 427. The form provides the Act for reference and allows the provider to describe the steps taken to ensure equitable access to, and participation in, federally assisted Alaska Adult Education (AAE) Programs. Providers must describe equitable access to, and participation in, the project or activity to be conducted by addressing the access needs of students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries to overcome barriers, including barriers based on gender, race, color, national origin, disability, age, and other protected classes outlined in Alaska. Based on local circumstances, the provider will determine whether these or other barriers may prevent students, teachers, etc., from such access or participation in the federally funded program. The State AAE Office ensures eligible providers are providing equal opportunity for students, teachers, and eligible providers that participate in any project or program through monitoring and technical assistance procedures.

The State AAE Office ensures equitable access and/or participation for gender, race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, marital status, changes in marital status, pregnancy, and parenthood. through technical assistance, monitoring, and professional development activities. This includes addressing and promoting equity in recruitment, service design, implementation, and support services that aim to provide equitable access and outcomes to all communities seeking access to services. The State AAE Office utilizes state leadership funding to provide

professional development to staff on topics such as implementing universal design strategies in the classroom environment, serving individuals with disabilities, serving the needs of English Language Learners, and providing assistance to students with barriers to technological learning needs, including distance education. For example, the State AAE Office worked with the Alaska Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training (MASST) federally known as the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) to provide professional development opportunities during the statewide conference. The State AAE Office continues to work with WIOA core, required, and additional partners to provide pathways to remove or eliminate barriers based on gender, race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, marital status, changes in marital status, pregnancy, and parenthood.

#### ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2023 Expected Level	PY 2023 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	35.0%	35.0%	37.0%	37.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	35.0%	37.0%	36.0%	38.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$4,200.00	\$4,720	\$4,250.0	\$4,750
Credential Attainment Rate	25.0%	25.0%	27.0%	27.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	23.0%	24.0%	25.0%	25.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

1

*"Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being developed and this data will not be entered in the 2022 State Plan modifications.*

#### PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL)

##### A. INPUT OF STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

1. INPUT PROVIDED BY THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, INCLUDING INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN, RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COUNCIL'S REPORT, THE REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER SATISFACTION, AND OTHER COUNCIL REPORTS THAT MAY HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED AS PART OF THE COUNCIL'S FUNCTIONS;

The State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee (SVRC) serves as the State Rehabilitation Council as outlined in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. In 2021, several vacant positions on the SVRC have been filled by the State of Alaska Boards & Commissions Office. Of the 18 board positions, which also includes the Director for Vocational Rehabilitation, there are currently two vacancies. The SVRC typically conducts four meetings a year; three, one-day meetings using

video/audio technology and one face-to-face, three-day meeting in Anchorage, Alaska. SVRC quarterly meetings continue to focus on different regions whereby DVR's Regional Managers report out on overall performance, outcomes, and initiatives unique to their regions. Due to COVID-19, all meetings over the past two years have occurred via virtual platforms and will continue until it is safe to resume in-person meetings.

SVRC members continue to hear from regional partners, employers, agencies, and the public on effective practices applied to and provide valuable input on how DVR can enhance overall performance. This knowledge and information will continue to play a key role in assisting DVR with the goal of delivering high quality services.

At the meetings, reports are given by the DVR Director; Chief of Vocational Rehabilitation Services; DVR Rehabilitation Manager(s); and partner reports from Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation; the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB); the Client Assistance Program (CAP); and the parent training organization "Stone Soup Group." The committee also heard from a variety of guest speakers from disability, community, tribal, and workforce development agencies.

Additionally, the Committee:

- Continued to improve the orientation of new members in order for members to become effective quickly. Changes include: more efficient scheduling of first orientation meetings, improving the agendas of those meetings, and assigning long-standing committee members as mentors for new members.
- Conducted outreach efforts to recruit new members for the SVRC, including enlisting partner agency assistance and using social media platforms such as Facebook.
- Dedicated one full day of the 3-Day meeting to the Assistive Technology (AT) Act and the SVRC's role as Alaska's AT Council.
- Solicited information from partner agencies on their experiences working with local DVR offices.
- Collected public testimony from consumers who shared their experiences with DVR.
- Supported DVR's business recognition efforts.

#### SVRC Recommendations:

Provided feedback to DVR on its online application process and website to ensure both are simple to navigate.

Reviewed and provided input to DVR on updated policies over the past year. DVR is in the process of updating its policies, and the SVRC expects to continue to review and provide input.

Continued priorities:

- Ensure individuals who need supported employment and are being adequately served;
- Training and recruiting of Community Rehabilitation Providers;
- Assist the rapidly increasing seniors with disabilities population, who need and/or want to work;
- Focus on increasing youth/student population, including but not limited to:
  - Improve use of apprenticeships or similar programs through AVTEC and other Department of Labor and Workforce Development programs, reducing employer's needing to recruit out of state;



- At-risk-youth exiting foster care through the Office of Children Services who are without housing or necessary linkages to services.
- Review and provide input to improve the current State Provisional Hire program;
- Engage with partners to achieve these numerous goals.

After reviewing the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, the SVRC suggested DVR:

- Add charts and graphs to the Plan
- Separate out services to Veterans
- Clarify statements

## 2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S RESPONSE TO THE COUNCIL'S INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS; AND

DVR incorporated the four recommendations below into the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan and will report back to the SVRC on accomplishments in those areas.

- Ensure individuals who need supported employment and are being adequately served;
- Training and recruiting of Community Rehabilitation Providers;
- Assist the rapidly increasing seniors with disabilities population, who need and/or want to work;
- Focus on increasing youth/student population, including but not limited to:
  - Improve use of apprenticeships or similar programs through AVTEC and other Department of Labor and Workforce Development programs, reducing employer's needing to recruit out of state;
  - At-risk-youth exiting foster care through the Office

The DVR Director also explained several strategies DVR uses to facilitate improved usage of Provisional Hire within the State system. The Evaluation Chair had suggested this priority and was pleased with DVR's plan.

With regard to SVRC input and recommendation to the 2022 Combined State Plan updates DVR:

- Clarified statements

## 3. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S EXPLANATIONS FOR REJECTING ANY OF THE COUNCIL'S INPUT OR RECOMMENDATIONS.

Alaska DVR did not include charts or graphs in the State Plan. All data referenced in the State Plan and corresponding charts and graphs can be found in the source data, DVR's 2020 CSNA and the SVRC Annual Report.

DVR did not separate out services to Veterans as this is not a requirement of the Vocational Rehabilitation portion of the State Plan. DVR did suggest that services to Veterans could be a topic of interest for the 2023 SVRC Annual Report.

## B. REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS

### 1. A LOCAL PUBLIC AGENCY WILL PROVIDE THE NON-FEDERAL SHARE OF COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WAIVER REQUEST;

DVR will not be requesting a waiver of Statewideness.

2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL APPROVE EACH PROPOSED SERVICE BEFORE IT IS PUT INTO EFFECT; AND

Not Applicable.

3. REQUIREMENTS OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN WILL APPLY TO THE SERVICES APPROVED UNDER THE WAIVER.

Not Applicable.

C. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH AGENCIES NOT CARRYING OUT ACTIVITIES UNDER THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

1. FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS;

*Returning Citizens:* DVR works with the Department of Corrections, Division of Probation and Parole to provide vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities exiting the correctional system. Additionally, DVR works with individuals who are assigned to the Anchorage Mental Health or Wellness Court. These courts are designed to divert people with psychiatric or addiction related disabilities, who are charged with misdemeanor or felony offenses, from incarceration and into community treatment and services such as mental health counseling and vocational rehabilitation, as appropriate.

DVR field offices informally work with re-entry initiatives implemented in Juneau, Fairbanks, Anchorage, and the Mat-Su Borough, as well as the statewide re-entry committee. These efforts are intended to improve the transition of inmates returning to their community and focus on finding and retaining sustained employment. The goal is to prevent recidivism and promote socioeconomic health. Although there are no official cooperative agreements in place, the collaboration and coordination efforts occur in each region.

*At-Risk Youth:* DVR, along with the Alaska Workforce Investment Board's (AWIB) At-Risk Youth program, other DOLWD partners, and the Office of Children's Services, have created a task force to address the needs of at-risk youth exiting the foster care and juvenile justice systems. DVR will take a lead role in ensuring vocational rehabilitation services are provided to youth who experience disabilities to increase the likelihood of success and independence through employment.

*Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation:* DVR is a partner of the Alaska Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) Consortium, composed of the 11, soon to be 12, American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services (AIVRS) grant recipients. There is a current MOU in place with the Consortium that outlines coordinated services and shared resources, joint planning and evaluation, technical assistance, and staff development. ADVR and the AIVRS programs also have a Contingency Plan in place; both the MOU and Contingency Plan will be revisited in 2020. Additionally, a member from the TVR Consortium serves on the SVRC as the Section 121 representative.

*State Council on Developmental Disabilities:* DVR actively participates, and has a cooperative agreement, with the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education. The DVR Director is a Council member and also serves on the Employment Committee, which consists of a consortium of agencies committed to working together to improve employment outcomes for youth and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and the Employment First Initiative. The cooperative agreement outlines the goals and collaboration needed to successfully achieve increased employment outcomes for youth with I/DD.

*Work Matters Taskforce:* DVR's Director and the Governor's Council's Executive Director co-chair the time-limited Work Matters Taskforce (WMTF), made up of 24 leaders and

representatives from across state government, businesses, and Alaskans with disabilities to develop a written plan to improve employment outcomes for all Alaskans with disabilities. The taskforce has coordinated with the USDOL Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) State Exchange on Employment and Disability (SEED) in order to fulfill the mission of the taskforce. The vision of the WMTF states: *Alaskans with disabilities have the capacity to become employed and the citizen right to equal access to employment.*

The core topic focus areas are:

- Private Sector: Building the capacity of the private sector to enhance employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities
- State as a Model Employer of individuals with disabilities
- Employment Services and Supports
- Prepare for Work and Transition
- COVID-19

Upon completion of the WMTF, a report will be generated and presented to Alaska's Governor. The report will identify potential areas of greatest impact, including strategies that if accelerated, or barriers that if eliminated, would lead to the greatest advancements toward achieving the goals of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility for applicants and employees with disabilities.

Through both the WMTF and regular operations, DVR continues to work with the Department of Administration, Division of Personnel and Labor Relations, and the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education to revamp the State of Alaska as a Model Employer (SAME) for Individuals with Disabilities Initiative. DVR continues to see considerable progress in expanding and improving Alaska's Provisional Hire program as part of this effort. Provisional hire allows for a State of Alaska hiring manager to bypass the typical recruitment process and immediately hire an eligible DVR consumer (who experiences a significant or most significant disability) in a provisional status for up to four months. The DVR counselor is responsible for ensuring the individual meets minimum qualifications of the position, and the counselor is available to support both the needs of the individual as well as the hiring manager. The increased ability for telework within the State system has also provided individual with disabilities for increased access to employment opportunities outside of Provisional Hire.

*Businesses:* DVR's Business Relations Coordinator is responsible for working directly with businesses to expand employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities across Alaska, including expanding DVR's Provisional Hire Program. Additionally, the State of Alaska has a full time ADA Coordinator to ensure accessibility for all employees.

DVR's Chief of Field Service, two Regional Managers, and Transition Coordinator participate on the Governor's Council's Planning Committee for the Employment First: Empowerment Through Employment conference, scheduled for May 2022. This conference will bring together employment specialists, I/DD and behavioral health providers, advocates, employers, the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, and state agency staff to strengthen efforts to educate and employ Alaskans with disabilities and/or behavioral health disorders. DVR hopes to use this conference to catapult the Disability, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) movement by focusing on how employers can enhance their workforce by hiring individuals with disabilities.

*Independent Living:* DVR continues to work with Access Alaska, which runs Independent Living Centers in Anchorage and Fairbanks, to coordinate case management services for individuals who experience Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). DVR also collaborates with the Alaska Brain Injury Network (ABIN) to achieve the most successful employment outcomes possible for

individuals with TBI. There is no MOU in place; however, DVR provides a letter of support outlining the anticipated coordination of services to Access Alaska to secure the TBI grant.

*Behavioral Health:* DVR has a Cooperative Agreement in place with the Division of Behavioral Health (DBH) which outlines the philosophy, points of collaboration, methods of service provision, and responsibilities of each agency to increase employment outcomes for individuals with Mental Health disabilities. DVR and DBH continue to pilot the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model to determine if rapid placement can positively impact the employment outcomes of individuals experiencing mental health disabilities. This model has been hampered due to a cyberattack on DBH, which impacted their grant system and delayed releasing Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for IPS implementation. DBH provided training to all DVR staff in October 2021 on the 1115 Waiver, as well as the IPS model.

*Senior and Disabilities Services:* DVR has a Cooperative Agreement with the Division of Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS), Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) Unit. This agreement was updated in September of 2021 to reflect regulatory changes to employment services provided under the Home and Community Based Waivers and DVR's updated Supported Employment (SE) policy. This partnership enhances coordination, increases referrals, and improves quality of services provided to individuals receiving SE services, independent living, and other waiver-based services to increase employment outcomes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. DVR and SDS have a taskforce that meets quarterly to discuss employment issues impacting individuals who experience I/DD. Additionally, the taskforce developed a DVR/SDS crosswalk to ensure field staff from both agencies have a better understanding of terminology and service delivery of each other's programs. DVR and SDS have provided cross training to each other's staff, most recently in October 2021, to improve service delivery and increase understanding of both programs.

*Veterans Affairs:* DVR continues to have an Interagency Agreement in place with the Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation & Education (VR&E) to cooperate, coordinate, and collaborate to increase vocational opportunities for veterans of the United States military service, regardless of the level of disability. By including DVR as a partner in a comprehensive system of case management, both DVR and VR&E can maximize benefits to veterans to better ensure the likelihood of employment outcomes. DVR has assigned a VRC to attend monthly meetings with VR&E to strengthen collaboration and coordination of services for this population.

## 2. STATE PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998;

DVR continues to maintain a Collaborative Agreement with the Assistive Technologies of Alaska (ATLA) to carry out the required activities of the Assistive Technology (AT) Act of 1998. DVR had hoped to update this agreement, however, the impact of the pandemic significantly strained ATLA's resources as everyone moved into telework environments. DVR aims to update this agreement in the coming year.

As the AT Act lead agency, DVR performs administrative functions for ATLA, which is the AT Act implementing agency.

As part of its administrative role, DVR facilitates an AT Advisory Council, which is required by the AT Act. DVR staff hold a videoconference every two months, attended by DVR, AT Council members and ATLA's Director. DVR staff also facilitates a half-day video conference with the AT Council and the ATLA Director once a year. The purpose of these meetings is to provide consumer input and oversight of ATLA's AT Act activities. When it is safe to do so, the AT Council will resume face-to-face meetings annually.

## 3. PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT BY THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE;

DVR does not coordinate with any programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the Department of Agriculture, as many of these programs support home loans, community facilities, and energy assistance.

#### 4. NON-EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH; AND

DVR coordinates with the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB), other DOLWD programs, the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), and the Office of Children's Services (OCS) through the "At-Risk Youth" taskforce primarily aimed at improving employment outcomes of youth exiting the DJJ and foster care systems. Although there is not a written cooperative agreement in place, team members have a referral system in place to appropriately connect youth with opportunities for success. DVR has also partnered with the AWIB At-Risk Youth staff to provide employment placement, budgeting classes, and life skills to this population.

#### 5. STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS.

DVR does not have any state use contracting programs.

#### D. COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS

##### 1. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S PLANS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES FOR COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AS WELL AS PROCEDURES FOR THE TIMELY DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL OF INDIVIDUALIZED PLANS FOR EMPLOYMENT FOR THE STUDENTS

DVR has a Transition Services policy in place outlining services to be provided to students transitioning from education to employment. In 2022, this policy will be absorbed into the VR Services Policy as Transition Services are a VR services.

DVR has a Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) policy and staff have been provided training on delivery of Pre-ETS required activities and Pre-employment transition coordination. DVR continues to coordinate with state and local education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities, from education services to provision of VR services. This includes a referral process from education agencies to DVR for Pre-ETS for students with disabilities, and to VR Services to ensure a smooth transition. In summer of 2021, the Transition Tools for Teachers, Parents and Students handbook was updated to include complete DVR referral guidance, including a fillable referral forms, and FAQs. The site also provides a School District Contact page for direct access to the DVR counselor serving each school.

DVR counselors received training for implementation of DVR's "Expectations for Counselor Outreach to Schools" with the goal of increasing the number of student DVR applications by 20 % in SFY21 and an additional 10% increase the two years following (SFY22 and SFY23). DVR has prioritized that Individualized Plans for Employment are developed within 90 days, or prior to graduation if an applicant is in the final semester of their final year.

Coordination with local education officials has been impacted by COVID-19, as many schools transitioned to distance delivery in March of 2020 and did not return to in-person learning until March of 2021. Additionally, some schools are still hesitant to have external partners physically visit schools, therefore, DVR is providing distance delivery services, as appropriate.

DEED and DVR have a long history of coordination in the implementation and growth of Pre-Employment Transition Services. Since 2015, DEED and DVR have benefited from intensive technical assistance through a NTACT partnership agreement. Over the years this has resulted in a number of joint endeavors to promote higher graduation rates through the widespread incorporation of Pre-ETS. This has been accomplished through the Alaska Interagency Transition Council (AITC), a multi-agency group of stakeholders involved in improving

secondary transition outcomes, including secondary transition teacher training, data gathering, and widespread implementation of Pre-ETS. This collaboration has resulted in:

- Quarterly AITC Newsletter
- Joint agency teacher trainings
- Data sharing agreement
- Shared input into goal development and planning
- Support of joint initiatives

This collaborative partnership was also an essential reason for the success DVR has had in continuing to deliver Pre-ETS during the pandemic, as both agencies braided funding to create virtual content and a delivery system to continue delivering teacher training and Pre-ETS, even as schools closed to in-person learning.

## 2. INFORMATION ON THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT WITH THE STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY WITH RESPECT TO:

### A. CONSULTATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO ASSIST EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES IN PLANNING FOR THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO POST-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING VR SERVICES;

In the state of Alaska, payment of subminimum wages is not legal, therefore neither DVR, nor the state education agency, have procedures for pursuing such employment.

DVR continues to work towards developing, cooperative agreements with all levels of educational institutions within the state, including local school districts, the Department of Education & Early Development (DEED), and the University of Alaska (UA) statewide system. DVR and UA have agreements in place for specific UA sites such as UA Southeast. DVR has a data sharing agreement in place with DEED that was completed in 2020, as well as an agreement with DEED's Special Education Unit in the Division of Teaching and Learning Support (TLS).

DVR has still not been able to complete an updated formal interagency agreement with DEED as the Assistant Attorney Generals for each Department unfortunately reviewed an old version of the agreement. DVR does hope to move forward with updating this agreement by December 2022. The agreement with DEED, which will form the basis for LEA agreement, will outline the overarching purpose and importance of transition from high school or the education of students and youth with disabilities to employment. Additionally, respective definitions will be described to ensure programmatic understanding. Both the DEED and LEA agreements will contain specific information regarding consultation and technical assistance, transition planning for students, roles and responsibilities for each agency, assurances, and financial responsibilities of each agency, but they will not include coordination for employment in sub-minimum wage, as this is not legal in Alaska.

Consultation and technical assistance includes activities such as transition planning, annual meetings, participation on the Alaska Inter-agency Transition Council (AITC), and TA directly provided to transition teachers at district and school levels through in-person or web-based presentations. including information on Pre-Employment Transition Services, Work Experience development, strategies for successful job placement, career exploration, local resources, financial and for post-secondary education, VR service descriptions, referral procedures, eligibility criteria, AT needs/assessments, and benefits planning.

The most notable TA service DVR provides is participation in the annual Alaska Statewide Special Education Conference. This conference attracts over 400 special education administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals from across the state. DVR utilizes this

conference to provide information and training on referral information and coordination of services. The 2019 Alaska Statewide Special Education Conferences featured a two-day Community Resource Provider (CRP) Training and cross-training designed to provide teachers and paraprofessionals with tools and strategies for developing and supporting students in work experience activities. In November of 2020, when the pandemic made in-person training impossible, DVR and DEED, in partnership with the AITC and NTAC, moved secondary transition training to a virtual platform in order to achieve a statewide impact. A web platform (TransitionAlaska.org) was developed to host trainings for secondary transition planning, including the availability of Pre-ETS, as well as how to access more individualized services by applying for DVR services. To date, over 300 teachers have participated in the ongoing trainings.

**B. TRANSITION PLANNING BY PERSONNEL OF THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATIONAL AGENCY THAT FACILITATES THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS;**

DEED's Special Education Unit in the Division of Teaching and Learning Support (TLS) and DVR have updated their interagency agreement designed to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from receipt of educational services in school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services.

The agreement includes:

1. DVR's assurance of the development and implementation of an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) for each student determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services within 90 days of eligibility or at least before the student leaves school;
2. Designation of a regional DVR contact in each school district who is responsible for clarifying questions and concerns relating to the implementation of the agreements with the local school districts, including access to DVR's Transition Coordinator as needed for additional coordination and technical assistance needs to be provided locally or at other events in which a TLS or DVR representative may connect;
3. Participating in TLS's IEP development meetings for shared students with disabilities, depending on availability. ADVR may participate in person or through use of alternative means such as conference calls or other methods. When ADVR is unable to attend the IEP meeting, TLS and ADVR will communicate regarding IEP goals and needed transition services as soon as possible after the IEP meeting;
4. Collaborate with and assist TLS SE teachers in transition planning for students with disabilities, to facilitate development and completion of their IEPs as required under section 614(d) of IDEA. ADVR will inform TLS SE Teachers of community events, such as job fairs, transition fairs, and career days to introduce and expose students with disabilities to possible career goals and objectives. DVR's Transition Coordinator has developed a robust marketing system through email lists of special education directors, correspondence school directors, high school counselors, and a Tools for Teachers list serve, which all together, reaches over 500 education staff covering all 54 school districts. Timely information is available on training opportunities, resources to enhance transition planning, and virtual delivery of pre-employment transition services;
5. Introduction and guidance of students with disabilities to post-school alternatives which include, but are not limited to employment, postsecondary education, vocational training, and adult education, by TLS transition coordinators and ADVR staff. Planning may also include coordination of social or vocational experiences for students with disabilities in real life work settings to improve competitive integrated employment outcomes; and

6. DVR's assurance that the core tenets, principles, and career goals stated in each student's Individual Education Program (IEP) will be incorporated into the development of their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). DEED's Special Education Unit also provides funding for members of the State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee to travel to events related to transition students such as the annual Statewide Special Education Conference.

**C. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, INCLUDING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES, OF EACH AGENCY, INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR DETERMINING STATE LEAD AGENCIES AND QUALIFIED PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSITION SERVICES;**

The agreement between Department of Education and Early Development's (DEED) Special Education Unit in the Division of Teaching and Learning Support (TLS) states that DEED, through the TLS, will designate a lead who will ensure that communication between TLS, DVR, and school districts is maintained. These personnel will also ensure that policies are developed and revised at the state department level, which will promote effective transition for students with disabilities from school into adulthood. The Alaska lead is Kate Foster, Education Specialist II.

This agreement further states that DVR will designate a staff member responsible for the continuation and enhancement of communication and policy development between DVR, TLS, and school districts for improving transition services statewide to students with disabilities. The Alaska lead is Jim Kreatschman, Program/Transition Coordinator II.

Youth Transition: DVR and DEED partner in contracting with Southeast Regional Resource Center (SERRC) under the Alaska Transition Outreach Project (ATOP) to provide continuing education and training to teachers on secondary transition planning and transition camps for students. Since the pandemic began, every fall semester, DVR and DEED have hosted virtual secondary transition trainings through ATOP to address wider implementation of assessments in transition planning and development of effective secondary transition goals. Each session also provides information on additional state and community resources and supports.

Due to the pandemic, providing Transition Camps to students required shifting to virtual delivery. In Spring of 2020, ATOP produced a series of four Transition Tuesday events. The success of this effort led to the creation of a joint DVR, DEED, and ATOP collaborative web platform, [TransitionAlaska.org](http://TransitionAlaska.org) for providing teachers and students with continuing development and training with recorded content and live webinars. While DVR continues to support in-person camps where possible, the virtual camps have proved effective in reaching a wider audience in urban, rural, and remote areas of the state. Spring 2021 State-Wide Virtual Transition Camp had 50 participants, while the Fall 2021 camp saw 136 students involved over 3 days of Pre-ETS activities through presentations by DVR, businesses, postsecondary education, and instruction in workplace readiness training.

Teacher training: DEED staff monitor school districts for compliance with Indicator 13. Utilizing their own staff, and through the ATOP grant, each district directly funds all teacher instruction time, travel, and lodging directed for compliance with indicator 13.

Transition Camps: DEED identifies school districts (six) through its monitoring efforts which need additional Technical Assistance delivering transition planning directly to students. DEED covers the cost of coordinating the camp, travel and lodging for the SERRC team facilitating the camps. DVR authorizes Southeast Regional Resource Center (SERRC), a Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP), to deliver Pre-ETS directly to students with disabilities. DVR's Transition Coordinator is responsible, in conjunction with the SERRC, for developing the content of all transition camps to ensure the services provided meet the five required Pre-ETS. DVR is responsible for authorizing the service and SERRC is responsible for actual delivery of services. DVR has expanded transition camps beyond its partnership with DEED to provide Pre-ETS through the Transition Camp model to additional school districts, juvenile justice facilities,



and foster youth in state custody. For these camps, SERRC works directly with the school district, DJJ facility, or state agency for the coordination, travel, and lodging costs. DVR authorizes the direct delivery to of Pre-ETS to students with disabilities. Transition Camps went virtual during the pandemic when schools were closed to in-person learning. DVR has found the virtual platform to be an effective method and have utilized this process for expanding transition camps to reach correspondence and home school students with disabilities to deliver Pre-ETS.

Until June 30, 2021, DVR was able to leverage funding with the Division of Employment and Training Services (DETS) to further expand the reach of transition camps through the National Health Emergency Grant (Opioid Grant). Currently, DVR funds the cost of direct Pre-ETS delivered and virtual transition camp activities. DETS' Job Center staff continue to participate as a resource and presenter at Transition Camps.

DEED - ATOP grant - \$220,000

DVR- Cost per student - average \$1,100 (as of 06/30/2021)

Other organizations - Costs depending on geographic location and requested content

Delivery of general outreach/instruction coordination: Both the DEED and DVR lead coordinate outreach activities that promote best practices for transition planning. Both agencies participate in the annual special education teacher's conference and annual new special education directors' training. DEED and DVR co-chair the Alaska Interagency Transition Council (AITC). The AITC is a stakeholder group consisting of DEED Special Education and Career & Technical Education, DVR, Tribal VR, urban and rural school district representatives, and the State's Parent Training and Information Center. The AITC provides cross-agency coordination of outreach, technical assistance on transition planning, and implementation with the following goals:

- Developing a flow of services across agencies.
- Developing and providing cross-agency training to staff and families about transition.
- Designing a social media campaign for disseminating promising practices in transition.
- Developing a scope and sequence of transition skill development for Alaska Students, including assessment. *In the spring of 2021, the group released Picture Your Future - Exploring Your Transition Goals with funding from the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority. The Student Workbook is a comprehensive assessment tool that covers all the domains of the secondary transition plan. The companion Teachers Resource Guide provides teachers with additional resources for transition planning. Additional funding through the consortium of TVR's allowed for the printing and distribution of both books to rural and remote school districts with limited internet access.*
- Each participating agency covers their individual costs.

#### D. PROCEDURES FOR OUTREACH TO AND IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO NEED TRANSITION SERVICES.

DVR/DEED conducted a survey of all school districts to identify the needs of students regarding Pre-ETS and the gaps in school district services. Pre and Post surveys of Special Education Directors and teachers involved in the Secondary Transition Teacher Trainings to identify additional gaps in teacher knowledge in regards to transition planning and the needs and interests of students for the development of Pre-ETS activities.

- Examples identified- Student resiliency, Student decision making.

- Result - Train the trainer sessions for teachers on both topics in the spring of 2021- training included follow-up lessons for teachers to use in the classroom.

Jointly participated in intensive technical assistance through a three-year partnership agreement with National Technical Assistance Center on Transition which ended September 30, 2020. The Alaska Interagency Transition Council (AITC) was created through this TA and continues fulfilling its mission. The AITC expanded its membership to include DEED's Career and Technical Education Division. The entire AITC participated in NTAC-C's Capacity Building Institute in May of 2020. The result of this collaboration was the expansion of Pathways-School to Work, Pre-ETS activities designed to bridge the gap between special education and career and technical education.

DVR is a stakeholder for, and participates in, DEED's development of its State Systemic Improvement Plan. DEED and DVR share data on the delivery of Pre-ETS in Alaska's high schools as a "best practice" for increasing the graduation rate for students with disabilities. DVR has also coordinated with the Graduation Assistance Program (GAP) to provide Pre-ETS to students with disabilities who are at risk of not graduating from high school.

DVR updated its Transition Tools for Teachers, Parents, and Students website in August of 2021. The site features a fillable referral form and referral guidance as well as a counselor contact page so teachers can have direct access to the DVR counselor serving their school as well as FAQs. Efforts to encourage referrals through this refined process include DVR/DEED joint training to special education directors at the annual Special Education Director Training and to teachers at the Alaska Statewide Special Education Conference and Virtual Secondary Transition Teacher Trainings. The form provides teachers with an easy and efficient way to connect a student with the VR counselor serving the school and provides the teacher with an avenue to request a joint conference with the student and counselor. Teachers can access the referral form on DVR's website under Transition Tools for Teachers. This website also hosts referral guidance, FAQs, and the School-to-Work Orientation to DVR video under the Teacher Tools for IEP meetings banner. There is also an access portal for the JOBZ Club Network list-serve. The Network utilizes the list-serve to promote Pre-ETS activities in addition to using it as a recruitment tool for teacher vendors to provide Pre-ETS in their schools.

In August of 2021, DVR counselors were provided and trained on a new "Expectations for Outreach to Schools" to increase student DVR applications by 20% in SFY21 and an addition 10% increase for each year for SFY22 and SFY23. Increased outreach activities in the fall of 2021 were preceded by a joint letter from DVR's director, Duane Mays and DEED's Director of Special Education, Donald Enoch, reminding school superintendents and special education directors of the shared responsibility of both agencies in the transition of students with disabilities and what schools could expect from DVR counselors.

DVR and DEED continue to jointly fund Transition Camps through the Alaska Transition Outreach Project. Expansion of transition camps have targeted remote areas of the state and continues to be an avenue of coordination of Pre-ETS with the Division of Juvenile Justice, Office of Children's Services (OCS), and American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation (AIVR/TVR) projects.

DVR and DEED rely heavily on the activities of the Alaska Interagency Transition Council (AITC) for coordinating outreach efforts and collecting data for program development. The AITC administered the Survey of Secondary Transition Personnel Training Needs for development of a regional special education teacher transition training program. The first Regional Transition Training was conducted in the Lower Kuskokwim School District with 30 teachers from rural and remote village high schools attending the two days. In November 2020, the secondary transition teacher training became a statewide virtual event, with over 200 teachers registering to participate over 3 sessions. The AITC also produces quarterly newsletters that are distributed

to special education administrators, and community stakeholders, which highlights the efforts of AITC member agencies activities in schools and communities across the state.

The AITC also maintains, with technical support of ATOP, the TransitionAlaska.org web platform for both training teachers and students through a combination live trainings and pre-recorded video lessons. A parent portal on the platform contains resources for parents.

#### E. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

DVR has signed agreements with Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) to provide specific vocational rehabilitation services. Only CRPs who meet the qualifications described in DVR's Standards for CRPs and the CRP application, and have a signed agreement with DVR, are eligible to provide such services. CRP applications may be submitted at any time and must be renewed every two years.

A CRP structure has been implemented for new applicants providing clear definitions of the probationary requirements, standardizing the service rating structure, and giving more control and flexibility to DVR Counselors (VRCs) and Managers (VRMs). The probationary requirements have changed from experience and college degree, to a combination of education, experience, training, and performance. There are also clear definitions of Standard, Exception and Provisional CRPs.

DVR and the University of Alaska, Anchorage (UAA) Center for Human Development (CHD) have partnered to ensure ongoing training is available to CRPs throughout the state. UAA has received national accreditation from the Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) to provide employment services training. DVR requires CRPs complete a minimum of 40 hours of ACRE accredited training to meet the minimum requirements to provide basic vocational rehabilitation services. Additional resources are provided for CRPs to obtain additional certifications to deliver advanced services.

The service provider application and agreement:

- Requires a background check for all CRP staff who may have unsupervised contact with DVR consumers, as well as a summary of their education and employment experience;
- Establishes specific fees for each service at two probationary levels and a standard level. Exception and Provisional Status rates are negotiable depending on DVR's needs (i.e., cost of living differentials for CRPs that may be needed in remote areas);
- Outlines the conditions and guidelines under which the division and the CRP will provide services for individuals with disabilities, specifying the responsibilities of each party, the scope of services, the evaluation criteria, and reporting and billing requirements; and
- Outlines standards for service providers including organizational structure; personnel; fiscal management; health, safety, and accessibility; and indemnity and insurance requirements.

DVR's CRP Specialist is responsible for approving the agreements and updating the AWARE MIS. Changes in key personnel and fees are reported to and negotiated with DVR. Following the principles of informed choice, information on the CRPs, including their services and fees, are available to DVR's consumers.

CRPs are monitored throughout the duration of each agreement. At a minimum monitoring consists of a thorough review of the following documents submitted by the CRP:

- Written narrative reports (VRC reviews the content and verifies if specific service and information was provided as requested);

- Prior to approving invoices for payment, the Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant (VRA) or VRC confirms receipt of the report and verifies information on the invoice. The invoice information (service category, hours, rates, dates of service, etc.) must correspond with the Authorization for Payment;
- Fiscal staff in Central Office review all CRP invoices before certifying them for payment;
- Timeliness of reports.

DVR conducts annual case reviews and includes a sample of cases that have utilized CRP services. The referral process and the quality of services provided by the CRP are reviewed.

The CRP Specialist periodically reviews CRP data from the case management system to verify timeliness and confirm CRPs are providing only the services they are approved to provide, at the approved rate. To keep informed on CRP performance and regional service needs, the CRP Specialist maintains regular communication with the VR Managers.

When a CRP has been identified as having performance issues, they are informed by the referring VRC. If performance issues continue or are significant, they are contacted by the CRP Specialist and steps are identified to resolve the performance issue. Depending on the circumstances, DVR may immediately suspend or terminate a CRP Agreement, or place the CRP on a Corrective Action Plan (CAP). DVR may decide not to approve an agreement with a CRP that has repeatedly been out of compliance or has a history of poor performance. DVR may impose additional reporting and internal control processes on CRPs that have past compliance and performance issues.

Data on CRPs are collected from staff and from the CRPs themselves for incorporation into the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). The surveys address the need to establish, develop, or improve CRPs within the State. The CRP Specialist has updated the website and the internal staff intranet, and anticipates creating a “CRP Resource Site” to assist CRPs. DVR continues to look for innovative ways to keep and nurture CRPs as they provide valuable services to the program.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, DVR hosted two CRP Town Hall meetings, one in April 2020 and another in April 2021, to check in with CRPs in order to better understand how they were managing services throughout the pandemic and to determine if there were strategies DVR could implement to best support them.

Due to these town hall meetings, DVR opened up the opportunity for Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) to provide remote services via distance delivery to participants. This enabled CRPs the ability to deliver valuable services to parts of the state where services were limited or non-existent, but also to deliver local services safely. Using technology to assist participants with resume writing, business plans, or other services was advantageous to both consumers and CRPs. DVR provided CRPs with a list of suggested activities for remote services that kept the consumer engaged and the CRP active in their community.

#### F. ARRANGEMENTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

DVR, the Division of Behavioral Health (DBH), the Governor’s Council on Disabilities and Special Education (GCDSE), the University of Alaska’s (UAA) Center for Human Development (CHD), the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (AMHTA), and the Division of Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS) continue to collaborate in order to provide extended services to Supported Employment (SE) consumers leaving the VR program, unless the individual is a youth with a disability who requires extended services that are not available through other sources.

The GCDSE functions as the State Council on Developmental Disabilities and builds capacity, plans for systems change, and advocates for change for people with disabilities. System change

includes housing, employment, early intervention, special education, lifelong learning, independent living, and inclusion in the community. DVR's Director is appointed to the GCDSE.

DVR has a Cooperative Agreement with the Division of Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS), Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) Unit. SDS maintains the I/DD disability register, which is the wait list for long-term support services. This agreement was updated in September of 2021 to reflect regulatory changes to employment services provided under the Home and Community Based Waivers and DVR's updated Supported Employment (SE) policy. This partnership enhances coordination, increases referrals, and improves quality of services provided to individuals receiving SE services, independent living, and other waiver-based services to increase employment outcomes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. DVR and SDS have a taskforce that meets quarterly to discuss employment issues impacting individuals who experience I/DD. Additionally, the taskforce developed a DVR/SDS crosswalk to ensure field staff from both agencies have a better understanding of terminology and service delivery of each other's programs. DVR and SDS have provided cross training to each other's staff, most recently in October 2021, to improve service delivery and increase understanding of both programs.

The Alaska Mental Health Board (AMHA) and the Governor's Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse work together to plan and advocate for policies, programs, and services that help Alaskans who experience mental illness and/or substance abuse issues. The DVR Director is an active member on the AMHB board. In addition, DVR has an on-going commitment to quality SE services, as evidenced by piloting the Individual Placement and Support model with the Division of Behavioral Health. DVR has sustained the principles that focus on wrap-around services for the most significantly disabled. DBH and DVR continues to work with the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority to establish the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model that should increase competitive integrated employment outcomes for those with severe mental illness. Additionally, with access to the 1115 waiver, individuals will be able to transfer to long-term supports under this waiver. Medicaid Section 1115 Demonstration Waivers provide states with flexibility to test new approaches within Medicaid to aid in redesigning and improving their health systems without increasing costs. In January 2018, Alaska applied to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for approval of an 1115 behavioral health waiver at the direction of the Alaska Legislature through SB 74. The intent is to create a data-driven, integrated behavioral health system of care for Alaskans experiencing serious mental illness, severe emotional disturbance, substance use disorder (SUD), co-occurring substance use and mental illness, and at-risk families and children.

DVR continues to be involved in an advisory capacity with different organizations that focus on groups that may often require SE services, such as those individuals with traumatic brain injury, those diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), individuals with severe mental illness, and aging individuals. The traumatic brain injury service delivery system is focused on collaboration with the Alaska Brain Injury Network, with an overarching goal to educate, plan, coordinate, and advocate for a comprehensive service delivery system for TBI survivors. DVR also holds a presence on the Alaska Council on Aging, as well as the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority Employment Indicators Workgroup.

## G. COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

### 1. VR SERVICES; AND

DVR partners with employers to promote the hiring of individuals with disabilities. DVR implemented the dual customer model to deliver services to employers. DVR has a Business Engagement Services Team (BEST) that is tasked with providing employers four core services as outlined in WIOA.

#### 1. Training and Technical Assistance in:

- Understanding the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and its application to a workplace situation; referral to the ADA partners' project;
- Disability awareness training provided to HR, managers, staff, boards, and other interested groups;
- Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs regulations;
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission regulations;
- Balancing the application of federal, state, and local employment laws and regulations.

## 2. Creating Opportunities for Placement by:

- Developing opportunities for both adults and youth to provide a full range of unpaid work experiences, informational interviews, job shadows, and On-the-Job Training (OJT);
- Offering recruitment supports, assisting in workforce development including placement, OJT, Schedule A, and Provisional Hire;
- OJT, Job Coaching, and external training (not at worksite).

## 3. Network Development through:

- Connecting with community partners and employers, locally and nationally. The BEST has connected over 50 employers with the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs staffers, the Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education, the AJC's Business Connection, and the VA VR&E's employment support team.

## 4. Linking to Financial Support offered through:

- Work Opportunity Tax Credit
- Workplace accessibility assessment
- Other employer incentives

Employers can assist DVR with successful placement of individuals with disabilities by:

- Establishing internal policies that prioritize hiring people with disabilities;
- Ensuring that the hiring of people with disabilities is part of a company's overall hiring plan;
- Conducting targeted outreach to attract qualified candidates with disabilities;
- Developing community linkages;
- Retaining and reviewing applications from applicants with disabilities when future openings occur; and
- Ensuring fully accessible online job applications and electronic and social media recruitment materials.

Other successful strategies for employers to practice in the assistance of building their talent pool include conducting targeted outreach through community based partners, such as DVR; forming community-linkages and partnerships, especially large employers who are seeking to diversify their workforce; posting job announcements in targeted spaces, such as ILCs or DVR offices; or starting internship programs or allowing for the development of work-based learning experiences in their agency.

Additionally, DVR can show employers how some of their existing programs may only require minor improvements to include the needs of employees with disabilities.

Modification or implementation of programs such as orientation and onboarding, career development (OJT), mentoring, and employee resource groups can increase retention rates of individuals with disabilities.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) partners with employers to promote the hiring of individuals with disabilities. DVR utilizes a dual customer model and works with employers to provide human resource services and connections to potential employees. DVR has a Business Relations Coordinator whose role is to promote industry sector partnerships with businesses in industries that are both high-demand and high-wage. DVR utilizes vocational evaluation services, and local labor market surveys to ensure individuals with disabilities are provided informed choice to foster the pursuit of career pathways in high-demand industries and apprenticeship opportunities. DVR continues to partner with WIOA core programs to maximize services to individuals with disabilities and coordinate services to promote successful employment outcomes.

DVR now captures its effectiveness in serving employers using the AWARE case management system. This includes:

- Employer Information and Support Services
- Accessing Untapped Labor Pools
- Training Services
- Workforce Recruitment Assistance
- Other Services

This data is provided as an aggregate with the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development on the WIOA Annual Report (ETA-9169).

In October 2020, DVR presented Alaskan business that hire individuals with disabilities with Business Recognition Awards through a virtual celebration. The Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, along with Alaska's sole U.S. Representative were in attendance. DVR has a similar event planned for 2022.

## 2. TRANSITION SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, FOR STUDENTS AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES.

DVR partners with employers to promote work experiences for youth and students with disabilities, leading to potential employment. Youth and students with disabilities benefited from coordination with employers through participation in:

- Transition Camps
- Summer and School-Year Work Experiences
- Tapestry
- Project Search
- Alaska Business Week Discovery Program

DVR's Transition Coordinator has created school to career pathways program (Pathways) in which CRPs work with employers to expose students to career pathways in high-demand or high wage industries. An examples includes, EXPLORE, University of Alaska, Southeast and Health Career Connections through the Southeast Health Education Center.

These programs partner with schools, businesses, and industry leaders to provide students with a hands-on opportunity to obtain a full understanding of specific jobs and careers within an industry and:

- The skills and competencies the employer is looking for;
- The working conditions are like for specific industries;
- The education and training are required for entry-level employment; and
- The pathways that are available for individuals to ascend from entry-level to higher-level jobs, and careers within an occupational arena.

DVR will develop additional partnerships with local job centers, businesses, and postsecondary education and training providers to expand and enhance the career pathways program.

Examples include:

- Job Centers: Interest inventories, job seeking skills workshops, and labor market information
- Education and training providers: Hands-on learning opportunities or basic industry recognized training- OSHA, NCCER, etc.
- Business: Work experiences, soft skills, expectations, and interest versus abilities

Student participants in pathways objectives include:

- Prepare: Gain an understanding of their own personal interests and abilities, through assessment, and how those interests match career clusters;
- Experience: Participate in industry lead exploration activities to experience workplace conditions, tasks and gain and insight into the skills and knowledge needed to advance within that industry;
- Reflect: Design a personal career pathways map using what they have learned about themselves and the industry; and
- Participate: Training in work readiness skills (soft skills) common across all industries.

DVR has worked closely with partners to ensure services are delivered safely and effectively, including the ability to provide services virtually, if needed.

## H. INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

### 1. THE STATE MEDICAID PLAN UNDER TITLE XIX OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT;

DVR has a current MOU with the Division of Public Assistance, describing how both agencies will work towards achieving competitive integrated employment outcomes for beneficiaries. This MOU was scheduled to be updated in August of 2020, however, both DVR and DPA had to prioritize serving the public via distance delivery in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and have not yet been able to complete the updated MOU. DVR has developed a draft of the agreement, which includes strategies, including best practices, for assisting Medicaid recipients' transition into meaningful employment while ensuring informed choice in determining their employment goals.

### 2. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES; AND

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and Division of Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS), located in the Department of



Health and Social Services (DHSS), was completed on May 3, 2017 and updated in September of 2021. The goal of the agreement was to clarify roles and responsibilities of DVR and SDS concerning common consumers. Areas addressed in the agreement include purpose, philosophy, terms, authority and funding, responsibilities, confidentiality, and referral. The agreement will remain in effect until amended or terminated by either party. Additionally, SDS and DVR developed a task force that combines DVR's expertise as it relates to employment and SDS' expertise as it relates to serving individuals with I/DD. The taskforce has developed and delivered tangible goals outlining how both agencies will provide technical assistance and support to one another. SDS presented its Home and Community Based Waiver programs to all DVR staff during Statewide training in October 2021. DVR's Chief of Services has, and continues to, present to SDS staff and providers on specific topics such as trial work experiences and assessments. Additionally, SDS and DVR work together on shared forms to ensure they meet the requirements of both programs.

### 3. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.

There is a current MOU between DVR and the Division of Behavioral Health (DBH) which was signed in August 2018. The purpose of the agreement is to establish the terms and conditions that will guide the partnership between DVR and DBH and reaffirm the collaborative framework for developing, expanding, and improving opportunities for competitive, integrated employment for individuals with disabilities who are served by both entities, including individuals with the most significant disabilities associated with behavioral health conditions.

Additionally, the agreement assures services are provided in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and as required under WIOA. Both agencies have identified the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model to pilot in at least two regions, however, DBH only has one provider currently delivering IPS services in Homer. DBH, along with all of the Department of Health and Social Services, experienced a cyberattack that impacted their ability to grant funds to agencies to carry out IPS services.

The IPS model is designed for individuals with severe mental illness to better prepare them for long-term employment. Additionally, DBH is now able to provide long-term supports for this population under the 1115 waiver, making pursuing supported employment a better option for this population.

DVR, DBH, and the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, together with IPS experts, meet quarterly to discuss successes, challenges, and strategies for ensuring fidelity of this model. DVR has also assigned a Rehabilitation Manager to be part of the IPS fidelity review team.

#### I. COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT; DATA SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

##### 1. SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

###### A. QUALIFIED PERSONNEL NEEDS

###### I. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL WHO ARE EMPLOYED BY THE STATE AGENCY IN THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES IN RELATION TO THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS SERVED, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY;

To assess and identify the need for qualified personnel, DVR accesses three systems:

1. DVR has developed and maintains a database through the AWARE case management software. This software includes information on the number of VR professionals providing VR services statewide, including case load carrying counselors, counselors providing evaluation and employment services under actual services, and business engagement staff reporting employer services through the employer module.

2. The Department of Administration provides an updated Workforce Profile each fiscal year. The profile represents demographics such as age, ethnicity distribution, and retirement projections with job titles and categories. This data becomes an important step in the workforce planning process and are used to predict personnel needs for the next five years.

3. Effective November 7, 2011, the Division of Personnel began to transition Human Resources staff back to each department, therefore, DVR, under the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, has its own personnel system for collecting and analyzing data for maintaining personnel needs and evaluating and managing employee performance. Currently, the standard for the size of each counselor's caseload is based on the level, VRCI, VRCII, or VRCIII. Currently, a VRCI caseload is 60 cases; a VRCII is 75 cases; and a VRCIII is 90 cases. This objective is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure caseload distribution remains equitable and can handle the number of participants entering the DVR program.

In SFY2020/SFY2021, DVR served 2,209/1,785 individuals with disabilities, utilizing the staff of 87 full-time vocational rehabilitation (VR) staff in the Client Services component.

Client Services staffing consists of:

- 1 Chief
- 1 Deputy Chief
- 5 Rehabilitation Managers
- 42 VR Counselors
- 26 VR Assistants
- 4 Administrative and Support Staff
- 1 Program Coordinator II
- 2 Program Coordinator I
- 1 Transition Coordinator
- 1 BEP Program Coordinator
- 1 Training Specialist II
- 1 CRP Specialist
- 1 ASL Interpreter

DVR's administrative component includes:

- 1 Director
- 1 Administrative Operations Manager
- 3 Fiscal
- 4 Administrative and Support Staff

## II. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL CURRENTLY NEEDED BY THE STATE AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY; AND

DVR finds present staffing levels sufficient to serve all eligible participants. The average employee turnover rate in SFY2021 was 19%.

- 1 Director

- 1 Chief
- 1 Deputy Chief
- 1 Administrative Operations Manager
- 5 Rehabilitation Managers
- 42 VR Counselors
- 26 VR Assistants
- 8 Administrative and Support Staff
- 3 Fiscal
- 1 Program Coordinator II
- 2 Program Coordinator I
- 1 Transition Coordinator
- 1 BEP Program Coordinator
- 1 Training Specialist II
- 1 CRP Specialist
- 1 ASL Interpreter

III. PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY, WHO WILL BE NEEDED BY THE STATE AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES IN 5 YEARS BASED ON PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED, INCLUDING INDIVIDUALS WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL EXPECTED TO RETIRE OR LEAVE THE FIELD, AND OTHER RELEVANT FACTORS.

During the years from SFY2020-FY2025, DVR anticipates a rate of 28 percent of staff leaving the field, resulting in approximately 27 projected vacancies from SFY2020-FY2025. DVR anticipates job vacancies will remain stable in the next five years through staff retirement or attrition. Additionally, DVR maintains approximately a 4-5 percent vacancy rate to allow for positions to be filled in the event of an influx of VR participants.

Projected vacancies over 5 years is 27 taken from a total number of 95 full-time positions available.

Position Projected Vacancies – SFY2020 to SFY2025:

- VR Counselor: 8
- VR Assistant: 12
- Administrative and Support Staff: 7

In DVR's 2020 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, the projected number of individuals with disabilities, including those with significant disabilities, is expected to increase by 2.9%, based on data from SFYs 2016-2017. A 2.9% increase in VR cases would equate to approximately an additional 30 cases per year, which DVR would be able to serve adequately without entering into an Order of Selection.

#### B. PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

## I. A LIST OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATE THAT ARE PREPARING VR PROFESSIONALS, BY TYPE OF PROGRAM;

Educational institutions within the State of Alaska currently lack Master's level programs in Rehabilitation Counseling. The University of Alaska offers academic programs in related disciplines, such as Associate and Bachelor degrees in Human Services, Rural Human Services, Psychology, and Social Work, as well as Master's degrees in Education, Counseling, and Counselor Education. DVR diligently ensures that all employees are fully qualified to provide vocational rehabilitation services and are either Certified Rehabilitation Counselors or on the path to becoming a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor. Those who do not meet CSPD conditions at the time of hire are mandated to enroll in rehabilitation counseling programs (full length or graduate certificates), offered via distance delivery through University of Massachusetts Boston, Emporia State University, and University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

In SFY2020-2021, six VR counselors enrolled in accredited Rehabilitation Counseling programs; five required a full master's degree and one required 2-4 graduate-level courses; and one VR counselor successfully passed the Certified Rehabilitation Counseling (CRC) exam. In SFY2021, DVR employed 42 VR Counselors. Of those, 90% or 38 VR Counselors have fully met the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) requirements.

## II. THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED AT EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS, BROKEN DOWN BY TYPE OF PROGRAM; AND

- University of Massachusetts Boston – Master's Degree in Clinical Rehabilitation & Mental Health Counseling: three students
- Emporia State University – Master's Degree in Clinical & Rehabilitation Counseling: one student
- University of Hawai'i at Mānoa – Master's Degree in n Kinesiology & Rehabilitation Science: one student
- University of Massachusetts Boston – Graduate-level course in Rehabilitation Counseling: one student

## III. THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED DURING THE PRIOR YEAR FROM EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS WITH CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, OR WITH THE CREDENTIALS FOR CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, BROKEN DOWN BY THE PERSONNEL CATEGORY FOR WHICH THEY HAVE RECEIVED, OR HAVE THE CREDENTIALS TO RECEIVE, CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE.

One individual graduated from the University of Massachusetts, Boston and obtained CRC Certification; one completed graduate-level courses at the University of Massachusetts, Boston and is eligible to take the CRC exam.

## 2. PLAN FOR RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION AND RETENTION OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL

DVR evaluates its personnel needs annually as part of the strategic planning process. The recruitment of qualified rehabilitation personnel has been historically challenging in Alaska due to lack of Rehabilitation Counseling programs within Alaska's university system, as well as the Division of Personnel regulations, which mandates that several unsuccessful in-state recruitment searches occur prior to out-of-state recruitment efforts becoming an option. To overcome these difficulties, DVR developed positive relationships with several Rehabilitation Counseling Education (RCE) programs to enable entry level and journey level counselors to obtain the necessary qualifications through distance education and intensive on-the-job supervision. This strategy is effective with paraprofessional staff as well. DVR recruits from various entities, including tribal vocational rehabilitation and human service agencies, and

offers paid and non-paid internships to rehabilitation counseling graduate students who are interested in relocating to Alaska.

In accordance with Title I of the ADA, DVR offers preferential hire to individuals with disabilities to enhance their access to meaningful and gainful employment, and to ensure that individuals with disabilities receive employment services in the most community integrated setting. Alaska relies upon educational institutions that deliver curriculums via distance education.

Relationships with educational institutions fluctuate based on availability of long-term training grants and staff needs. However, DVR has developed a strong working relationship with Virginia Commonwealth University, University of Kentucky, Western Washington University, University of Massachusetts Boston, and West Virginia University. Although DVR does not always have active students at these universities, DVR's Training Specialist maintains relationships for future needs. To reach a wider applicant market outside of the traditional in-state recruitment, DVR vacancies are advertised at the UAA Career Development Center, University of Washington Center for Continuing Education in Rehabilitation (CCER), and other university partners. Qualified individuals are identified through the on-going relationship with academic programs throughout the nation.

### 3. PERSONNEL STANDARDS

#### A. STANDARDS THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH ANY NATIONAL OR STATE-APPROVED OR -RECOGNIZED CERTIFICATION, LICENSING, REGISTRATION, OR OTHER COMPARABLE REQUIREMENTS THAT APPLY TO THE PROFESSION OR DISCIPLINE IN WHICH SUCH PERSONNEL ARE PROVIDING VR SERVICES; AND

The State of Alaska does not currently mandate licensure for rehabilitation counselors. As a result, DVR has adopted the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) academic degree requirements as its standard. Strategies that DVR employs to ensure an adequate supply of qualified vocational rehabilitation professionals are:

- Participating in local job/career fairs.
- Formation of an in-house training and staff development team.
- Offering paid and non-paid graduate internships.
- Supporting rehabilitation counseling as an employment goal for DVR participants.
- Supporting staff in fulfilling academic requirements to qualify for CRC certification.
- Seeking out training to help staff achieve CRC recertification and professional growth
- Utilizing training resources and support of CCER.
- Arranging presentations to graduate-level counseling students at the local university.
- Developing a career advancement system that integrates education, training and credential requirements for initial hire and future promotion.

DVR successfully modified rehabilitation counselor position descriptions to comply with CSPD provisions/mandates.

The Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification requires a Master's Degree in Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling, or Rehabilitation Counseling to sit for the CRC exam. The program must be accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). The Commission also accepts Master's degrees in related fields with additional courses along with a period of time working under a CRC to sit for a CRC exam.

All non-CRC counselors receive Requirements for Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) packet, including a memo issued by the Chief of Rehabilitation Services during the Alaska DVR New Hire Orientation. The memo clearly states that the Alaska DVR has adopted the standard of competency established by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC). The staff must read and fully understand their educational responsibilities and must sign the Acknowledgement of Requirement for the CSPD. Copies are stored in the agency personnel file, the agency Training Specialist staff training record, and the staff's office.

DVR's Training Policy outlines staff expectations as it relates to obtaining a CRC, as well as all other training provided by the agency.

**B. THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(7)(B)(II) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, TO ENSURE THAT THE PERSONNEL HAVE A 21ST CENTURY UNDERSTANDING OF THE EVOLVING LABOR FORCE AND THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.**

Employees who do not meet the qualifying standard must fulfill all academic requirements necessary to qualify for the CRC examination within five years of hire (for VRC I) or three years of hire (for VRC II). Additionally, these employees will receive more intensive supervision and ongoing review of all non-delegable functions from Vocational Rehabilitation Managers (i.e., guidance and counseling, eligibility determination, individualized plan for employment, plan amendment approval, and closure). DVR supports employees who are pursuing additional education through assisting employees obtain scholarships or funding additional classes, depending on what is needed to sit for the CRC.

As part of DVR's strategic planning process, an annual evaluation of the effectiveness of recruitment and training practices is completed, and areas of improvement are then identified and incorporated into the plan. As personnel move through the progression of the VRC or VRA series, their performance is rated based upon their experience, education, and competency. Once an employee meets the minimum qualifications for the next promotional level of the series and shows, through a thorough review of their work, that they have the competency to perform at the higher level, the employee is offered a promotion to the next level of the series. For counselors, this requires extensive education, such as obtaining a graduate degree, and successfully passing their CRC examination. Additionally, counselors with a CRC must have at least a year of experience as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to be hired at, or promoted to, a VRC III level.

Alaska DVR recognizes the importance of its employee's education and supports required training and continuing education of all its employees. DVR employs a Training Specialist whose primary duties are to plan, implement, and facilitate staff development and training for DVR's professional, paraprofessional, administrative, and support staff. Every new employee receives an Employee Development Plan which outlines the training and/or education necessary for them to perform the duties of their position and, preferably, moves them towards promotion. The Training Specialist, in conjunction with the Chief and Deputy Chief, coordinates annual Statewide Training in which the topics are derived from finding from Case Reviews, new or emerging practices for serving individuals with disabilities, and policy and procedures.

Each year, Statewide Training encompasses a variety of topics that ensure personnel maintain their understanding of the needs of the workforce with disabilities, including current and relevant areas that enhances their ability to serve DVR participants. Since 2020, DVR has delivered Statewide training virtually successfully. Topics such as Neuro-developmental Aspects of Traumatic Brain Injury, Gender Identity and VR, and Motivational Interviewing for Youth with Disabilities are just some training topics that DVR has provided to personnel in order to maintain its requirements in accordance with section 101(a)(7)(B)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. DVR will continue to coordinate Statewide Training every year and offer

CRC credits for that training. Most trainings are now recorded and are located on DVR's SharePoint site for further dissemination.

Additionally, for training that is offered by other entities, such as the Alaska Brain Injury Network, Trust Training Collaborative, Special Education, and School on Addictions, there is an expectation that staff who received such training share the materials, knowledge, and skills with those who may not have attended. If the agency has not previously disseminated the information, the training materials and resources will be distributed through training announcement e-mails and DVR's SharePoint site.

#### 4. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

##### A. A SYSTEM OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT FOR PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS WITHIN THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO ASSESSMENT, VOCATIONAL COUNSELING, JOB PLACEMENT, AND REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING TRAINING IMPLEMENTED IN COORDINATION WITH ENTITIES CARRYING OUT STATE PROGRAMS UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998; AND

Throughout the year, staff are provided professional development opportunities in assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, rehabilitation technology, and assistive technology (AT). DVR recognizes and supports the efforts of employees to upgrade their skills and knowledge through staff development. Training is provided on a continual basis to ensure professional enhancement. Training may be provided to groups or to individuals based on specific staff expectations and duties. DVR employs VR counselors who provide services in the areas of assessment, guidance and counseling, and job development. Staff who provide services in each area are provided training throughout the year in their areas of expertise.

Additionally, in 2019, DVR provided all staff training on the use of assessment in the vocational rehabilitation planning process for the use in conjunction with Career Pathways. DVR's Division Statewide Assessment Team (DSAT) also regularly seeks out training on the most current assessment tools used for individuals with disabilities including training on the World of Work Inventory (WOWI) Career Assessment tool.

Job development staff, which is part of the Business Engagement Services Team (BEST) regularly attends training focused on job development strategies, including providing services to employers to ensure successful placement of individuals with disabilities. These staff members also received Windmills training which focuses on attitudes and human factors, while addressing concerns including legal requirements and accommodation. The modules primarily consist of exercises relevant to the everyday world of work to which participants can relate and then remember on the job. The Windmills program also incorporates language and requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendment Act (ADAAA).

DVR coordinates training with the Assistive Technology of Alaska (ATLA) to provide Assistive Technology training to DVR in areas such as an overview of AT for employees with disabilities, how to conduct an AT needs assessment, and common cognitive barriers and AT strategies. ATLA developed weekly webinars in areas such as solutions for distance communication including akCanConnect which provides equipment for Alaskans who have vision and/or hearing loss. Training on Rehabilitation Technology is frequently provided to staff in conjunction with much of the AT training including topics such as "Independent Living through AT" which describes how AT can aid someone in transitioning to independent living.

##### B. PROCEDURES FOR THE ACQUISITION AND DISSEMINATION OF SIGNIFICANT KNOWLEDGE FROM RESEARCH AND OTHER SOURCES TO DESIGNATED STATE UNIT PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS.

Training and development are guided by issues identified during needs assessment, and consider budget availability, new federal initiatives, and outcomes of program evaluation. Needs

assessment involves individual/regional case reviews, client satisfaction surveys, consumer forums, performance appraisals, performance skill rating tools, employee development plans, Client Assistant Program annual reports, and supervisor/employee training needs surveys.

During PY2019 and PY2020 DVR staff participated in several conferences and trainings, including:

- Annual Regional Training – Medicaid Home and Community Based Waivers & Employment Services; Protection & Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS); Business Enterprise Program; AWARE Case Management System; SharePoint – Helping Employees Collaborate Within the Agency; Fiscal Training; AFP Payment Processing & Supporting Documents; Section 1115 Medicaid Waiver Services; Job Search; Using Semi-Autonomous Research Assistant (SARA); Supported Employment Policy; VR Self-employment;
- Ethics Training –Code of Professional Ethic for Rehabilitation Counselors; Basic Ethics Considerations for CRC Counselors and Rehabilitation Professionals; Ethics to Day-to-Day Case Management; Ethics in Public Service; Basic CRCC Ethics for Vocational Rehabilitation Assistants; Ethical Dilemmas Working with Students; Distance Counseling Ethically; Mindfulness for VR Practitioners;
- Conferences – Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI); Intercultural Approach to TBI; Climbing Higher to Serve Alaskans; National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB); Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) Building VR's Future with Business; CSAVR Spring 2021 Virtual Conference; Alaska Statewide Special Education; Reducing Recidivism & Reentry; School on Addictions & Behavior Health; Transforming Career Readiness; Re-orienting Virtual Conference for ASL Interpreter; Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) National Conference; Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) Virtual Conference; Southeast Regional Institute on Deafness;
- Webinars – Anxiety: What is it? Why we need it; ABC Cultural Competency; Motivational Interviewing; Straight Talk About the ADA; RSA compliance and quality assurance monitoring; Does my Client need Medicine; Traditional Health-based Practices; Navigating VR Outcomes When Working with Transgender/Gender Non-binary Clients;
- Online Training – National Certificate in Employment Services; How to Write a Business Plan; ASL Course; Job Developing; Frontline Leadership; Leadership Development; Fusion Computer Software; Windmills; Blind Services Training; Creating Accessible Digital Materials; Self-employment; ServSafe Food Manager (for BEP staff); LeadVR Cohort 1 & 2; CRC Exam Preparation Course;
- Face-to-Face Trainings – Postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Training activities occur on a continuous basis and many are delivered via videoconference and through webinars offered by Alaska Training Cooperative, University of Alaska Center for Human Development, University of Arkansas Currents, University of Wisconsin-Stout, University of Washington Center for Continuing Education in Rehabilitation, AAACEUs, and National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials. VR counselors utilize the services of medical/psychiatric consultants to regularly update their disability-related knowledge. Evidence-based best practices and advances in the field, presented by the Institute on Rehabilitation Issues, National Rehabilitation Association, and the National Rehabilitation Counseling Association, are regularly distributed to the field staff. The DVR leadership team receives regular updates from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), and maintains active communication with University of Washington Center for Continuing Education in Rehabilitation (CCER) to keep pace with the changes in the field of vocational rehabilitation.



The DVR Training Specialist is responsible for disseminating all available training opportunities and resources to DVR staff. Information is regularly emailed to the field and then placed on the DVR SharePoint Training page so staff can easily access information at a later date. Additionally, DVR staff regularly participates in research opportunities including participation with the University of Montana Rural Institute, Mathematica, and the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation at Sargent College of Rehabilitation Sciences at Boston University. Publications of these research projects are shared with all staff.

DVR staff is trained regularly on Policies and Procedures, including reviews of existing policies and procedures conducted by regional managers during regional weekly staff meetings. Significant policy and procedure changes are disseminated to all staff through structured training that is either delivered in person, or via distance means, such as Zoom or GoToWebinar, by the Chief or Deputy Chief. Staff is also provided with FAQs to assist with answering commonly asked questions about a particular policy.

## 5. PERSONNEL TO ADDRESS INDIVIDUAL COMMUNICATION NEEDS

DVR employs a full-time American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreter who is fluent in ASL to facilitate communication with participants and staff who use ASL. The agency supports employees who are interested in becoming proficient in ASL to increase communication with hard of hearing and deaf participants. DVR's Director is fluent in ASL as well. Tele-interpreting is widely used. VR counselors who serve this population can use the text messaging software, SARA, as a form of accommodating their participants' needs. For individuals with limited English proficiency, DVR maintains a roster of employees fluent in various languages; staff may utilize the services of a professional interpreter when needed. DVR relies heavily on Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation programs to educate state staff regarding culturally appropriate methods of communication with Alaska Native participants.

Other tools used to address individual communication needs include:

- IP-Relay: TTY/TDD system connects callers to an operator who then reads their messages to the recipients and transcribes their messages back to the callers.
- Video Phone allows users to access videos, IP Relay services, and instant messaging services
- Captel Phone allows users to see the text of a phone call in real-time while hearing it.
- Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART) to provide real-time captioning.
- Fring allows users to make voice/video calls and IM chats from an iPhone/iPod.
- JAWS, Dragon, Fusion, CCTV Readers allow users to access screen content.
- Zoom video conferencing offers a closed caption feature.

## 6. COORDINATION OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

DVR consistently collaborates with the State of Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) on numerous staff development and training initiatives.

DVR Transition Services: DVR reaches out to students with disabilities throughout Alaska to foster a smooth transition from secondary school into vocational/academic training and into the world of work. VR counselors within each regional office are assigned to specific schools to streamline the referral process, ensure counselor participation in Individual Education Plan (IEP) development, and ensure that all schools are informed of DVR services. Contact with schools is carried out, at a minimum, on a monthly basis. Rural and village schools communicate with DVR through their special education staff, as well as DVR staff who are assigned and travel

to that particular rural region. The Transition Coordinator holds bi-monthly teleconferences with all VR counselors involved in transition initiatives. These teleconferences allow staff to share information, brainstorm ideas, and develop effective strategies for service delivery.

The Tapestry Program, which is administered through the University of Alaska's Center for Human Development, caters to young adults with intellectual disabilities with the goal of teaching them appropriate personal, social, and vocational skills in fostering a successful transition to employment. DVR actively collaborates with the Center for Human Development, the Anchorage School District and other community agencies to ensure that these young individuals with disabilities access the full array of vocational rehabilitation services.

Additionally, DVR has implemented Project Search in three regions in the state (Fairbanks, Anchorage, Mat-Su). The goal for each student is competitive employment. They are provided real-life work experiences and training in employability and independent-living skills. The program involves an extensive period of skills training and career exploration, innovative adaptations, long-term job coaching, and continuous feedback from teachers, skills trainers, and employers. As a result, at the completion of the training program, students with significant intellectual disabilities are employed in nontraditional, complex and rewarding jobs.

DVR Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) - DVR field staff are carrying out Pre-ETS activities for students with disabilities age 14 to 21 (up until the student's 22nd birthday) the following services:

- Job exploration counseling;
- Work-based learning experiences;
- Counseling on opportunities for enrolment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education;
- Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living;
- Instruction in self-advocacy includes peer mentoring.

DVR staff also provides Pre-employment transition coordination, including attending Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings for VR applicants and attending person-centered planning meetings for individuals receiving services under Title XIX of the Social Security Act.

Alaska Statewide Special Education Conference: DVR strongly encourages counselor attendance and active participation in this annual conference to establish/maintain an ongoing dialogue with school districts and stay abreast of new developments in the field of special education (e.g., disability issues, AT, classroom accommodations, new legislation, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requirements, etc.). The DVR Transition Coordinator participates in this conference annually as a presenter and vendor. Through breakout sessions, the Transition Coordinator provides pertinent information on how DVR is expanding the coordination of Pre-ETS in school districts across the state. DVR also offers a two-day post conference training in partnership with DEED. The training prepares teachers to enhance transition planning utilizing Pre-ETS as assessment activities for writing transition goals in the IEP. It also introduces, through agency presentations, teachers to additional postsecondary resources for transition planning. Teachers received in depth training in: core areas of assessment, job development, job accommodations, and job supports; development of functional transition plans that meet indicator 13 requirements; statewide resources for connected with postsecondary resources like Social Security work incentives and DSDS waiver services; and transition support services such as Transition Camps, JOBZ Club, and Phlight Club that enhance transition services already being provided in the schools. Over 30 teachers have attended the post-conference course over the last two years. In 2020 DVR's Transition Coordinator again presented at the Special Education conference, providing instruction through breakout sessions on implementing Pre-

Employment Transition Services for students and preparing students for post-secondary education. The special education conference was virtual in spring of 2021 and there was no invitation for presenters offered.

Virtual Secondary Transition Teacher Training: In response to the pandemic limiting face-to-face opportunities for training, DVR, DEED, and the AITC expanded teacher training to a virtual platform in November of 2020. In an effort to expand its reach statewide to fill the training gap, the group implemented a web platform, TransitionAlaska.org, for delivering live webinars and pre-recorded content. The first series in November and December of 2020 covered secondary transition planning topics: assessments, IEP goal development, and implementation of DVR's Pre-Employment Transition Services. Post training surveys indicated teachers' interest in tools for increasing student resilience and building decision making skills. The spring of 2021 the group provided two "train-the-trainer" sessions to address these needs. The group expanded its secondary transition teacher training series in the Fall of 2021 with another three-part series that included success stories from teachers who had implemented DVR's Pre-Employment Transition Services to prepare their students for transition. Virtual delivery has allowed the AITC to not only expand its training reach to over 300 teachers, but also allowed DVR the ability to be flexible in developing content relevant to teacher needs.

Special Education Director Conference: The DVR Transition Coordinator or Chief of Rehabilitation Services regularly presents at this annual conference, which offers special education professionals from Alaska's 54 school districts opportunity to learn about DVR services. The Special Education Director Conference has become a virtual event since the pandemic began. Constraints limit participation of outside agencies. To mitigate this the AITC maintains a list of special education directors and markets directly to them for:

- Presentations of DVR and DVR services at orientation and throughout the year
- IEP participation and referral guidance
- Availability for technical assistance for implementing Pre-Employment Transition Services
- Secondary transition training for teachers

DVR's Transition Coordinator participates in several regional and state initiatives: University of Alaska Anchorage Center for Human Development (Tapestry Project), Alaska Interagency Transition Council, Statewide Independent Living Council, and the Alaska Mental Health Trust's Employment Initiative. These boards develop initiatives and activities that improve the transition outcomes of students with disabilities, however, it is the responsibility of DEED to disseminate the information to school districts and special education officials and recommend involvement. DVR disseminates initiatives to regional managers and counselors to ensure they can assist with carrying out agreed upon initiatives on a local level.

## J. STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT

1. PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE REHABILITATION NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES RESIDING WITHIN THE STATE, PARTICULARLY THE VR SERVICES NEEDS OF THOSE:

A. WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THEIR NEED FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

The Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), as part of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD), is responsible for the administration and operation of Alaska's public vocational rehabilitation program. While DVR continually assesses its performance and the needs of Alaskans with disabilities, the Rehabilitation Act, as amended, Public Law 99-506 Section 101(a), requires each state vocational rehabilitation agency conduct

a Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) jointly with the State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee (SVRC) triennially. The SVRC's Planning and Recruitment Subcommittee worked with DVR on the preparation and updating of the DVR State Plan and triennial CSNA. The results of the CSNA are used to develop goals, priorities, strategies, and actions for both DVR's Strategic and Combined State Plans.

DVR will be conducting a new CSNA in the summer of 2022, and is currently relying on data from the 2020 CSNA.

Information obtained from the 2020 CSNA, which analyzed data from FY18, showed that long-term supports continue to be a challenge in the state of Alaska, due to geography, availability of health providers, services, and lack of funding for long-term supports. The vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities include access to job coaches and access to long-term funding for job coaches for adults. The scarcity of service providers in rural Alaska creates significant challenges when delivering Supported Employment services.

The State of Alaska has historically experienced basic health care and health care facility shortages throughout the state. The most populated areas of Alaska, including Anchorage, Palmer, Wasilla, Fairbanks, Juneau, Kenai, and Kodiak, have a high number of individuals receiving services through the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) Medicaid waiver, with large portions of the state having no waivers. For individuals with a complex plan of care living in rural areas, services or providers may not exist, and they may be required to relocate to an area that has such services.

As of June 30, 2018, the Division of Senior and Disabilities Services had restricted the issuance of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) Medicaid waiver to 50 new waivers granted annually, with no more than 600 total enrollees per year. In SFY 2018, the average length of time individuals spend on the IDD Medicaid waitlist was 40.6 months. The needs of this population include a shorter timeline for time spent on the waitlist.

For DVR participants who experience a most significant disability (MSD), they may require supported employment (SE) services to ensure success with long-term supports. SE cases can be complex and involve a team of providers who work with the individual and DVR.

The American Communities Survey data for Alaskans for 2017, showed an estimated increase of 2.9% in the number of individuals with disabilities from 2016 to 2017. Based on projected data, this upward trend will most likely continue. As Alaska's population is aging, those over 65 are projected to represent close to 20% of the state's population by 2025. This could impact the availability of healthcare services for people with disabilities.

During the 2020 CSNA, DVR was showing significantly different disabilities served between those individuals served in the Vocational Rehabilitation program versus students with disabilities (SWDs) who are potentially eligible and receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services.

In SFY 2017, 66% of SWD reported a cognitive impairment as a primary disabling condition versus 24% of the VR program population. Additionally, 12% of SWD reported experiencing a psychosocial disability, significantly lower than the 43% who experience psychosocial disabilities who are served by the VR program. Only 3% of SWD reported experiencing a physical or orthopedic impairment compared to 24% of the VR population.

The difference in disability types between the student with a disability population versus the VR program population is somewhat expected given AKDVRs heightened focus on students who are receiving services under an Individualized Education Plan.

It is anticipated that DVR's 2022 CSNA will show the impact of COVID-19 on individuals with the most significant disabilities and employment. Even prior to the pandemic, Alaska was experiencing health care shortages, therefore, services to individuals with the most significant disabilities are certain to have experienced negative consequences due to an already strained health care system.

#### B. WHO ARE MINORITIES;

DVR collects demographic information of participants to evaluate the racial breakdown of individuals served through the program. The racial distribution of potentially eligible students with a disability served by DVR is also reviewed. Based upon results from DVR's 2020 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, DVR serves the following total populations at the following rates:

- White: Population 66%; VR Served 58%; Potentially Eligible Served 30%
- Alaska Native/American Indian: Population 15%; VR Served 19%; Potentially Eligible Served 50%
- Black: Population 4%; VR Served 6%; Potentially Eligible Served 4%
- Asian: Population 6%; VR Served 2%; Potentially Eligible Served 2%
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander: Population 1%; VR Served 1%; Potentially Eligible Served 2%
- Multi-Race: Population 7%; VR Served 14%; Potentially Eligible Served 12%

In the rates noted above, DVR is serving minorities at a rate equal to, or above, the rate of that population in Alaska. The only exception is the Asian population, however, when multi-race is included, DVR is serving the Asian population at a rate of 4.3%. Additionally, the Asian population in Alaska is significantly skewed by the demographics of those employed in the fishing/cannery industry. Over 10% of Asians living in Alaska live in two large fishing communities, Kodiak and Dutch Harbor. These 2 cities have a population of just under 50% Asian, most of whom are employed in canneries and do not require VR services. Based upon analysis of minority racial categories, including examination of those who are multi-race, DVR has concluded that it is not unserving, nor underserving, minorities.

Some of this data could change in the 2022 CSNA, considering minorities have shown to be more vulnerable to the adverse effects of COVID-19. Additionally, minorities may not necessarily have equitable access to vaccinations nor do they have equitable access to COVID-19 treatment, such as monoclonal antibodies.

Although, as noted above, the Alaska Native and American Indian population is served at a rate higher than population occurrence, DVR recognizes that the most underserved population are those individuals living in the rural and remote areas of the state, that are demographically made up of primarily Alaska Native. The vocational rehabilitation needs of Alaska Native and American Indian include the need for culturally relevant services. This often includes DVR leveraging its relationships with local Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation partners. Additionally, the needs of this population also include DVR's flexibility to support less "traditional" employment outcomes, and support outcomes that focus on subsistence as self-employment.

Other vocational rehabilitation needs of the rural population include services that are created due to the economic conditions and lack of employment opportunities in rural Alaska. Often, participants must travel to urban areas for training or employment, removing them from their support groups and family. In addition, this creates an additional need for training, transportation, and maintenance.

### C. WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM;

Based upon results from DVR's 2020 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, DVR determined that the most underserved population are those individuals living in rural and remote areas of Alaska. Counselors from urban areas are assigned to regional "hub" areas, which are more highly populated rural areas, such as Bethel, Dillingham, Barrow, Nome, and Kotzebue. DVR does not have offices in rural hubs, instead, the assigned counselors would generally travel to the hubs to meet with participants several times a year. Travel was significantly hampered throughout 2020 and 2021 as rural communities prioritized the health and wellbeing of their citizens, especially the elder population. Many communities requested that visitors postpone travel in order to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. DVR worked with TVR partners to discuss and honor specific community requests. Travel is expected to resume once travel restrictions are lifted. DVR will work with TVR to determine the most appropriate time for rural visits.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has had negative consequences throughout the world, a silver lining that was realized was the expansion of video technology. Meeting platforms such as GoToMeeting, Zoom, or WebEx and texting/email software, such as SARA, has greatly assisted with communication efforts. Although broadband can be limited or non-existent in rural areas, through recent legislation, Alaska will be receiving federal funds to assist rural communities to increase their broadband capabilities.

Rural areas also tend to have a lack of other supportive services, as well as limited employment opportunities, making effectively serving rural participants challenging. Areas in which DVR has field offices (which are in the most highly populated urban areas of the state) are adequately served, whereas rural and remote areas in which DVR can only serve itinerantly, show significantly smaller participant numbers. Increasing participants in these areas requires intensive cooperation with local TVR programs.

Economic conditions and lack of employment opportunities significantly affect rural communities. Often participants must travel to urban areas for training or employment, removing them from their natural supports and family. In addition, this increases the cost of training as there are costs for transportation and maintenance.

The 2020 CSNA showed the State of Alaska was experiencing a population decline as out-migration was exceeding in-migration. The changes were relatively small, less than 1%; however, this can have an impact on services due to reduced availability of resources, as lower population areas tend to have less resources available.

Over the past two years, DVR has seen a significant decline in the number of applicants. Individuals with disabilities have been adversely affected by COVID-19. Historically, when the unemployment rate increases, the number of applications for VR services increase as well. However, in calendar years 2020 and 2021, DVR saw the opposite, the unemployment rate increased, but applications for VR services decreased. DVR had already been seeing a downward trend of applications, but the pandemic created a sharp decrease in those wanting to pursue employment.

In order to address this decline, DVR has created an online application process in order to improve and streamline access to services. DVR has also created a QR Code for individuals to scan with smartphone cameras that brings them directly to DVR's online application process. Individuals can begin the application process via smartphone or any other tablet type device if they do not have readily access to a computer. If the individual does not have access to the internet, they can call their local DVR office and begin the application process via over the phone. DVR has staff available to assist individuals with filling out the necessary paperwork, and also to assist individuals who may experience a communication issues. This is in alignment

with DVR's "no wrong door" approach, ensuring equitable access for all Alaskans with disabilities wanting to pursue services.

#### D. WHO HAVE BEEN SERVED THROUGH OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM; AND

DVR works closely with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) partners and routinely refers participants to other WIOA programs. For PY20, the Wagner-Peyser program served 228 individuals with disabilities. The individuals with disabilities identified by WIOA partners are individuals who have self-disclosed a disability and do not necessarily meet the eligibility criteria for DVR services. The Infrastructure Cost Agreement with the Division of Employment and Training Services (DETS), did not identify any shared users in PY20 as Job Centers were closed to the public most of the year due to the pandemic.

The Governor of Alaska and the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) have determined that the expansion of Registered Apprenticeship by employers will lead youth and adults, including those with disabilities and those who have multiple barriers to employment, into good paying jobs with career opportunities, while providing employers with new workers to fill in-demand occupations.

DVR is co-located in 4 of the 14 American Job Centers throughout the state. Those co-located offices are in Wasilla, Juneau, Sitka, and Ketchikan. In addition, DVR counselors work with Job centers in Nome, Dillingham, Bethel, Kodiak, and Homer when traveling to those locations. DVR counselors also work closely with Job Center staff in both Anchorage and Fairbanks.

The referral process among the core programs is implemented on an individualized basis depending on the specific needs of the individual. All DOLWD staff are trained and expected to be knowledgeable in the requirements and eligibility of other core programs to ensure an appropriate program referral. Appropriate referrals are necessary to leverage resources and maximize services. DVR and DETS also have a co-enrollment policy for shared participants.

DVR uses the communication software, SARA, developed by The Career Index. Using this communication software, DVR and other WIOA partners within the state workforce system can share data, and partner, on services for mutual participants, as required under Section 116(d)(2) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act.

#### E. WHO ARE YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING, AS APPROPRIATE, THEIR NEED FOR PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES OR OTHER TRANSITION SERVICES.

In DVR's 2016-2018 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), and again in the 2020 CSNA, DVR determined a target goal of 585 students to be provided Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) annually. For State Fiscal Years (SFY) 2020 DVR exceeded this goal, serving 677 students, however in SFY21, DVR fell just short of this goal, serving 557. This shortfall was directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the shift of many schools from in-person learning to virtual. Schools have since re-opened with appropriate safeguards in place and DVR has had better success in reaching students with disabilities in SFY2021 and SFY2022. DVR's Transition Coordinator developed and distributed technical assistance to teachers via a secondary transition newsletter and promoting transition initiatives that are successful.

DVR's Transition Coordinator created a coaching model that focuses on teacher and student knowledge of postsecondary transition requirements, best practices, and Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) transition services. This coaching is offered through distance learning and was provided in coordination with the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) until September 2020.

The Division of Labor and Workforce Development is working with the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development and local school districts to expand work-based learning opportunities for students and out-of-school youth, including youth with disabilities. This includes school-to-apprenticeship programs, internships, and co-operative learning to strengthen career paths and better prepare young Alaskans for employment in their chosen career field.

Additionally, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) has created positions specifically with the assigned task of improving employment outcomes for At-Risk Youth. These positions work with the Office of Children's Services, the Division of Juvenile Justice, and DVR to link at-risk youth with appropriate resources in order to increase their likelihood of success. DVR has defined an at-risk youth as a youth who is between the ages of 14-24 who is less likely to transition successfully into adulthood, and whose future is at risk of an adverse outcome unless someone intercedes.

## 2. IDENTIFY THE NEED TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP, OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE; AND

The 2020 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) determined that having an adequate number of CRPs who can deliver a wide variety of services has been a consistent challenge for DVR, in urban areas, but more so in rural Alaska. Establishment and development CRPs in rural areas is undoubtedly the biggest need for Alaska DVR. Additionally, there are a limited number of CRPs in urban areas, and remote locations may not have any CRPs. Monitoring CRP performance and accountability can also be a challenge and requires a full time CRP Coordinator to manage the quality assurance process.

In SFY2018, there were 30 CRPs in the Anchorage area, 12 in Fairbanks, 10 in Juneau, 9 in the Mat-Su area, 7 along Alaska's panhandle, and 2 on the Kenai Peninsula, for a total of 70 CRPs in Alaska.

With regards to improvement of the CRP program, the availability of adequate training for CRPs is an obstacle, and finding those with specialized transition training to work with students with disabilities has been challenging. DVR has at least one counselor in each regional office to perform in-house job development services to meld the dual customer model that addresses the needs of both employers and participants and to offset CRPs who lack job development experience.

To address the needs of transition age youth, DVR worked with CRPs to develop proposals to best serve this population. Additionally, DVR's Rural Team continues to strategize methods to increase the number of CRPs in rural areas, which are traditionally underserved.

To better serve rural/remote areas, DVR's Transition Coordinator has developed an abbreviated process to develop CRPs by allowing for Special Education teachers to become Teacher CRPs more quickly in order to deliver Pre-Employment Transition Services to students with disabilities. DVR's JOBZ Club and S'Cool Store programs are specifically designed to support Teacher CRPs (local teachers) and communities in the delivery of various activities for students. These activities might include Transition Camps where teams from urban areas fly in to rural/remote communities to expose potentially eligible students to education and employment opportunities throughout Alaska. Additionally, DVR designed a proposal process for service providers to create innovative Pre-Employment Transition Service programs to be delivered in their communities; ensuring the design and service delivery met fidelity guidelines set by DVR. DEED's Division of Career and Technical Education joined the AITC in the spring of 2020 and collaborated with DVR to increase the number of students with disabilities involved in career and technical education (CTE). The project design was to expand the network of teacher vendors to include CTE teachers who could provide Pre-ETS projects as a method for exploring careers in the trades.



In spring 2020, when schools closed to in-person learning, recruiting students with disabilities to participate in Pre-ETS became extremely difficult. Schools and teachers were reluctant to plan activities as many of them were struggling to simply teach students week to week. In remote areas of the state, the school is often the only place that has internet access, making virtually reaching these students impossible. In the beginning of 2021, as students returned to in-person learning, there was optimism for implementation of Pre-ETS, but limited time for planning and scheduling reduced normal participation levels. However, by summer of 2021, DVR's Summer Work Experience Program operated at pre-pandemic levels of participation.

As schools fully reopened in the fall of 2021 CRPs were once again coordinating with schools to deliver Pre-ETS. Unfortunately, participation of teachers providing Pre-ETS through JOBZ Club and S'Cool Store has decreased substantially as schools are reporting they are seeing behavioral issues that have arisen secondary to the pandemic.

Throughout all of the uncertainty, DVR has seen growth in the virtual delivery of Pre-ETS. A significant amount of work has gone into developing the TransitionAlaska.org as a "trusted" site as transition programming for teachers and Pre-ETS delivery for students with disabilities. With the delivery of Pre-ETS through virtual transition camps, it is now possible to provide services in almost any classroom in the state. Over half of the students attending transition camp in the fall of 2021 were students from rural/remote Alaska schools.

Through the use of town hall meetings and discussions on how to improve service delivery during the height of the pandemic, DVR opened up the opportunity for CRPs to provide remote services via distance delivery to participants. This enabled CRPs the ability to deliver valuable services to parts of the state where services were limited or non-existent, but also to deliver local services safely. Using technology to assist participants with resume writing, business plans, or other services was advantageous to both consumers and CRPs. DVR provided CRPs with a list of suggested activities for remote services that kept the consumer engaged and the CRP active in their community.

### 3. INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES FOR TRANSITION CAREER SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH SUCH SERVICES ARE COORDINATED WITH TRANSITION SERVICES PROVIDED UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

DVR's Transition Coordinator works closely with the State of Alaska's Department of Education and Early Development (DEED). The April 1, 2019 report outlining Alaska's State Systemic Improvement Plan, Phase III, is designed to increase the graduation rates of students with disabilities. The report includes the participation and collaboration with DVR and the Pre-Employment Transition Services that have been offered to potentially eligible students ages 14-21.

DVR's Transition Coordinator worked with the NTACT to host a two-day transition academy in Bethel for special education teachers from the Lower Kuskokwim School District. Thirty teachers were provided the opportunity to meet with local and state partners for services to support high school students in achieving graduation and moving into their post-school realities. Teachers were also provided tips about transition assessments and writing transition plans. Attendees learned about JOBZ Club and S'Cool Store (transition curriculums provided by DVR), programs for developing entrepreneurship, and ways of incorporating subsistence activities into transition plans. An additional six virtual sessions with NTACT and DVR are incorporated into this training.

DVR's Transition Coordinator presented at the 2020 Alaska State Special Education Conference. This session provided information on how DVR can enhance transition services to prepare students to transition from school to work.

Alaska DEED and school district staff are working with DVR to evaluate the effectiveness of JOBZ Club and S'Cool Store in increasing graduation rates and post-school outcomes for students with disabilities. As SFY2019 is the first year of collecting data at the student level, this will be an on-going evaluation, however, since numbers decreased during the pandemic, DVR will continue to collect this data through 2024 to determine more accurate effectiveness. DVR will also be providing data to Alaska DEED on employers who provide opportunities for high school students with disabilities.

DVR continues to provide data on students participating in Pre-ETS for development of DEED's Statewide Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP). DVR also provides input for goal development as a stakeholder agency in SSIP development.

DVR has been extremely successful in providing statewide services to transition age students in urban, rural, and remote locations. This has been accomplished through partnerships with school districts, specialized Pre-Employment Transition Services Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs), Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Programs, and other organizations that assist with coordinating transportation and enrollment. The effects of the pandemic have resulted in a number of changes and a steep learning curve in order to maintain effective statewide delivery of Pre-ETS. Early implementation of virtual services and marketing activities have resulted in an increase of the number of students participating in Pre-ETS statewide in 2021, and has been able to increase the ability to reach remote areas once students returned to in-person learning.

## K. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

### 1. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS IN THE STATE WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES

#### **k. 1. The number of individuals in the State who are eligible for services**

The 2018 American Community Survey 1-Year estimates approximately 89,491 individuals, or 12.6% of the Alaskan population between the ages of 18 to 74, experience a disability. This is a significant decrease from the 2016 estimate. Outmigration from Alaska continues due to job loss in the oil and gas industry, and Alaska has been losing about -.12% of its population annually.

As of 2019, the American Community Survey 1-Year estimates approximately 82,900 individuals, or 11.7% of the Alaskan population between the ages of 18 to 74, experience a disability. This is a decrease of 0.9 % from the 2018 estimate.

The American Community Survey, 2020, 5 – Year estimates report that approximately 87,806 individuals, or 12.3% of the Alaskan population between the ages of 18 to 74, experience a disability. This is an increase of 0.6 % from the 2019 estimate.

DVR serves a portion of the population of individuals with disabilities as some individuals are working and others may not be interested in working. According to the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section State Projections, population growth/loss during FFY2020 is expected to range from a low of -22%, to a middle of +60%, and a high of +175%, with births being the primary factor in population growth. Population growth/loss during FFY2021 is expected to range from a low of -26%, to a middle of +63%, and a high of +173%, with births being the primary factor in population growth. Additionally, the report indicates a population growth/loss during FFY2022 is expected to range from a low of -29%, a middle of +61%, a high of +171%, and finally; the population growth/loss during FFY2023 is expected to range from a low of -33%, to a middle of +59%, and a high of +170%. An increase in deaths and a decrease in births are the primary factors in the population growth figures for FFY2022 and FFY2023.

Using the middle projection rate for both FFY2020 and FFY2021, the estimated number of individuals in the state who are eligible for service are as follows:

FFY2020: 94,706 (+.68%)

FFY2021: 95,325 (+.65%)

Additional data released from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section State Projections, population growth/loss provided the number of individuals in the state who are eligible for service for FFY2020 and FFY2021, and the estimated numbers for FFY2022, and FFY2023 are as follows:

FFY2020: 90,453 (-5.3%)

FFY2021: 90,555 (+.11%)

FFY2022: 91,110 (+.61%)

FFY2023: 91,645 (+.58%)

According to Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section, Alaska's job growth, wage growth, and unemployment rate were significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Businesses in Alaska shutdown to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. This caused a rapid drop in employment beginning in April 2020. As of October 2020, U.S. job growth decreased 6.0% and Alaska decreased 8.8%. After ten straight quarters of wage growth, Alaska's total wages fell dramatically with the pandemic. Wage growth in Alaska dropped by 3.7%, fairing a little better than the overall U.S. decrease of 4.2%.

As of September 2020, Alaska's unemployment rate was 5.9%, while the U.S. average was at 6.9%. Employment by regions in Alaska dropped significantly. On average, the statewide drop in employment was 8.8%, but rural areas of the state suffered as much as a 16.7% drop in employment.

Alaska relies heavily on its tourism industry for jobs, but because Alaska's tourist season never materialized in summer of 2020, Leisure and Hospitality lost more jobs than any other sector (-9,600 jobs, 35%). Other sectors that depend on tourism rebounding include the transportation, warehousing, and utilities sector, which lost 3,600 jobs.

In PY20, 25% of individuals with disabilities employed with assistance from DVR were in a combination of Sales, Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance, and Food Prep/Serving job occupations. Many of those jobs were incorporated in the Transportation, Leisure and Hospitality, and Tourism sector.

Per the January 2022 Alaska Economic Trends 2022 Jobs forecast:

*"Alaska recovered 7,100 jobs in 2021 after losing 27,600 in 2020, with the gains spread across industries as the losses had been the year before. The industries hit hardest initially by the pandemic, such as transportation and the leisure and hospitality sector, recovered the most jobs in 2021 as bars and restaurants reopened and travel picked up. The pandemic continued in 2021, but vaccines rolled out early in the year and businesses adapted to safety measures. An abbreviated tourist season, higher oil prices, and federal relief money helped Alaska recover a modest number of jobs. Despite the obstacles and uncertainty in 2022 that could limit growth, we expect the state to recover another 9,800 jobs in 2022. That 3.2 percent increase would leave us less than 11,000 jobs short of 2019's pre-pandemic employment. Most industries won't fully recover this year, though. Only construction, health care, and federal employment are forecasted to end 2022 at or above their pre-COVID levels.*

*Independent tourism was unexpectedly strong in 2021 as vaccine-emboldened travelers filled any open hotels and spent more than the average cruise ship visitor. Bed taxes and car rental taxes*

*soared, in some cases rivaling pre-pandemic receipts. As an additional boon, limited cruises resumed in July after Congress temporarily waived the Passenger Vessel Services Act requirement that foreign-flagged ships stop in Canada before reaching Alaska. About 116,000 cruise ship visitors passed through in 2021 which is less than a tenth of what's typical with fewer sailings and low occupancy but a season that extended into October. Alaska's labor force is the smallest it's been in decades. Just 64 % of the working-age population is employed or looking for work. The high numbers of national job openings and quits could further shrink the worker pool by limiting out-of-state workers for Alaska's seasonal industries this year.*

*Alaska's population has declined for four straight years, mostly because fewer people moved in to replace those who left. Natural increase — births minus deaths — offset the migration losses until 2017. Unresolved long-term state government revenue problem is another drag on the economy as we enter 2022. The State of Alaska still faces tough decisions about revenue, spending, and the Permanent Fund Dividend. Alaska's full recovery will take longer than some states, partly because we entered the pandemic in a weaker position. Alaska underperformed the nation for job growth every year over the last decade and entered a three-year recession in 2015. When COVID-19 hit, we'd had just one year of slight job growth. Despite the obstacles, this year's forecasted job growth is an improvement from 2021. The anticipated return of cruise ships will spur recovery for leisure and hospitality and smaller industries like scenic and sightseeing transportation. If independent travelers return in masse this year, that will also benefit airlines, hotels, bars, and restaurants. Employers might not be able to fill all their positions, though, and the worker shortage will inhibit growth. Manufacturing, construction, retail, transportation, leisure and hospitality, and health care are all vulnerable to worker shortages in different ways. Seafood processing, which makes up most manufacturing in Alaska, and the leisure and hospitality sector are seasonal and rely on out-of-state workers, who could be in shorter supply. Construction and retail tend to have high turnover, which means frequent recruitment.*

*Health care providers and bars and restaurants withstood the worst of the pandemic in different and unusual ways, and they're grappling with worker burnout and uncertainty, which can result in more quits or a slower rate of return. Health care workers have worked under pressure for nearly two years, with the fall of 2021 bringing Alaska's largest hospitalization surge to date. Hospitals in some communities had to ration care, and strapped hospitals in other states refused to take Alaska patient transfers as they grappled with their own shortage of health care workers and a wave of COVID patients. Bar and restaurant workers have faced ever-changing work conditions, limitations, and consumer behavior. Also at risk for burnout are teachers, who have faced demanding and constantly changing work conditions during the pandemic."*

## 2. THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO WILL RECEIVE SERVICES UNDER:

### A. THE VR PROGRAM;

In FFY2019, Alaska DVR provided services to 1,648 individuals, which was an 11% decrease from the previous year. The downward trend would suggest that DVR may continue to see a decline. Historic unemployment rates in Alaska have led to a decrease in number of individuals served annually, and the increase of students with disabilities served under Pre-Employment Transition Services have offered early intervention services which have possibly led to a decline in cases.

Number of Applications:

- FFY20219 – 1,173
- FFY2020 – 756 = (-43%)
- FFY2021 – 699 = (-8%)
- FFY2022 – 856 = (+20%) (Estimated)

- FFY2023 – 1,022 = (+18%) (Estimated)

Number served by Federal Fiscal Year:

- FFY2017 – 2,136
- FFY2018 – 1,841 (-15%)
- FFY2019 – 1,648 (-11%)

Original Estimates:

- FFY2020 – 2533 (-8.9%)
- FFY2021 – 2308 (-8.9%)

While FFY2020 and FFY2021 estimates were based on the historical decline in cases, the actuals were significantly less than projected. DVR's focus over the next two years will be to increase the number of individuals with disabilities served throughout Alaska. Strategies for increasing individuals served are explained in detail in section I. 2.

Actual Number Served:

- FFY2020 – 2,021 (-7.8%)
- FFY2021 – 1,518 (-28.4%)

Federal Fiscal Year Estimates:

- FFY2022 – 1,907 (+22%)
- FFY2023 – 2,470 (+22.5%)

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic significantly decreased the number of eligible individuals served by the VR program. Alaska DVR experienced a 28.4% drop from FFY2020 and FFY2021. This decrease is consistent with other state VR programs across the Nation.

Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section reports that as of November 2021, Alaska's unemployment rate was at 6% and the U.S. average was at 4.2%. However, it has been determined that the unemployment rate is less useful as an economic measure due to data collection issues and a large number of individuals leaving the labor market who are not work nor looking for work. In November of 2021, Alaska's job growth was down by 2.4% (U.S. down by 4.1%).

Alaska's vaccination rate remains below the national average, and individuals with disabilities pose a higher risk of complications caused by COVID-19. Given the significant unknowns going into 2022, it is difficult to forecast the number of eligible individuals with disabilities DVR will serve in upcoming fiscal years due to personal vaccine choice, overall health of individuals with disabilities, job availability, childcare availability, and infection surges of virus variants.

#### B. THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM; AND

For the FFY2019, the Supported Employment Program provided services to 189 individuals with the most significant disabilities. SE cases have decreased along with overall VR program numbers. Low unemployment numbers coupled with stipulations regarding when SE funds could be expended (during employment only) have led to a decrease in numbers and spending difficulties.

Number served by Federal Fiscal Year:

- FFY2017 – 246

- FFY2018 – 214 (-8.6%)
- FFY2019 – 189 (-8.8%)

Original Estimates:

- FFY2020 – 173 (-8.7%)
- FFY2021 – 158 (-8.7%)

While FFY2020 and FFY2021 estimates were based on the historical decline in cases, the actuals were significantly less than projected. DVR's focus over the next two years will be to increase the number of individuals with most significant disabilities served throughout Alaska. Strategies for increasing individuals served under Supported Employment are explained in detail in section I. 2.

Actuals:

- FFY2020 – 121 (-35.9%)
- FFY2021 – 79 (-34.7%)

Estimates:

- FFY2022 – 81 (+2.5%)
- FFY2023 – 85 (+4.8%)

Similar to the decrease in number of individuals served under the VR program, the Supported Employment Program saw significant decrease in the number of individuals served. Forecasting estimates for FFY2022 and FFY2023 is extremely difficult given multiple factors such as personal vaccine choice, overall health of individuals with disabilities, job availability, childcare availability, and infection surges of virus variants.

#### C. EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION.

DVR was not operating under an Order of Selection during FFY2021, as there was adequate funding and qualified staff to provide services identified in IPEs to all eligible individuals. DVR anticipates this availability of qualified staff and funding will continue during FFY2022 through FFY2024. Throughout the year, DVR will continue to closely monitor expenditures and obligations in relationship to VR participant numbers as well as staffing patterns to ensure DVR's ability to provide VR services to all eligible individuals.

#### 3. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR VR SERVICES, BUT ARE NOT RECEIVING SUCH SERVICES DUE TO AN ORDER OF SELECTION; AND

DVR is not on an Order of Selection.

#### 4. THE COST OF SERVICES FOR THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS ESTIMATED TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES. IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION, IDENTIFY THE COST OF SERVICES FOR EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY.

Analysis of Funding:

The FFY21 budget beginning October 1, 2020 had a \$210,324 increase in funding from RSA.

During FFY2021, DVR collected \$674,500 in Social Security Reimbursements. The three-year average of reimbursements is: \$554,394. DVR purchased specific "Ticket Tracking" software. This software tracks all tickets currently outstanding and files the reimbursement paperwork.

DVR relinquished \$6,500,000 of FFY21 federal funds during the re-allotment process due to increasing carryover balances from prior year grants. Anticipated increase in spending did not materialize due to the pandemic and other factors.

For FFY19, DVR relinquished Title VI, Part B funding in the amount of \$133,914 of SE services, and \$133,914 of the set-aside for youth with the most significant disabilities. In FFY20 and FFY21, DVR relinquished all Title VI Part B funding, \$150,000 for SE services, and \$150,000 of set-aside for youth. Although DVR relinquished this funding, Supported Employment services were still provided, but DVR used general program funds.

#### PY2020 Costs:

- Eligible receiving Title I and Title VI: 1,785; \$2,835,575; average cost of services, \$1,588; and
- Receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services: 543; \$1,064,650; average cost of services, \$1,960.

#### PY2021/FFY2022 Estimated Costs:

- Eligible receiving Title I and Title VI: 1,907; \$3,028,316; average cost of services, \$1,588; and
- Receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services: 585; \$1,1 million; average cost of services, \$1,880 (per DVR's CSNA).

#### PY2022/FFY2023 Estimated Costs:

- Eligible receiving Title I and Title VI: 2,470; \$3,922,360; average cost of services, \$1,588; and
- Receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services: 585; \$1,1 million; average cost of services, \$1,880 (per DVR's CSNA).

DVR is not in an Order of Selection.

### L. STATE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

#### 1. IDENTIFY IF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES WERE JOINTLY DEVELOPED AND AGREED TO BY THE STATE VR AGENCY AND THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, IF THE STATE HAS A COUNCIL, AND JOINTLY AGREED TO ANY REVISIONS

The Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), along with the State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee (SVRC), continually assess the vocational rehabilitation needs of Alaskans with disabilities and the success of DVR in meeting those needs. DVR's strategic plan is a major component in continuous program evaluation and planning for the division in the adherence to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended and the associated regulations, 34 CFR Parts 361, 363, and 397.

The mission of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is to assist individuals with disabilities to obtain and maintain employment.

DVR's principles include believing in:

- The empowering value of employment in an individual's life.
- Honoring and respecting each individual's strengths, skills, choices, abilities, and cultural identity.

- Developing strong partnerships with Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation programs, schools, job centers, and centers for independent living.
- Delivering high quality vocational rehabilitation services.
- Employing and developing highly qualified and skilled rehabilitation staff.
- The principles of stewardship in the use of public resources.

DVR is committed to the challenge of continuously improving both the organization's systems and the delivery of services to those individuals receiving vocational rehabilitation services. DVR utilizes the strategic planning process to develop a plan to put into action the concept of continuous improvement. DVR has an on-going three-year strategic planning process coinciding with the federally required triennial Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). Based on the information collected and analyzed from the CSNA, analysis of current Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) regulations, Common Performance Measures, and input from DVR staff, the strategic planning team identified service delivery, staff development, organizational efficiencies, and DVR's role in the statewide workforce and service delivery systems, as the basis for the new strategic plan. A working version of the plan is updated quarterly by the individuals responsible for specific activities. The information will be utilized by the Leadership Team to determine if the agency is meeting its goals and priorities and if revisions are needed.

The strategic planning team is composed of the DVR management and leadership teams, the SVRC Executive Committee, including the representative from the Client Assistance Program (CAP) and the Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) 121 programs.

DVR and the SVRC developed goals and priorities for the state vocational rehabilitation (VR) program during the strategic planning process. DVR's strategic plan is aligned with the three-year cycle of the CSNA that was completed in 2020, with interim progress assessments regarding goals and priorities.

The strategic planning process is comprehensive and includes defining the agency's mission, principles, goals, priorities, strategies, and measurements. Input for the development of these goals, priorities, and strategies comes from the CSNA; public testimony given at the SVCR's quarterly meetings; ongoing consumer satisfaction surveys; and other program evaluation activities including case file review, management information system reports, and monitoring activities. DVR continuously monitors its progress towards meeting Federal common performance measures as well State missions and measures, and makes necessary adjustments to priorities and strategies as required. The goals, priorities, and progress are reviewed quarterly by the DVR Leadership team and discussed with the SVRC at their quarterly meetings. Adjustments are made as required. The current strategic plan is a three-year plan, running 2020 through 2023.

A summary of the goals and priorities includes:

Delivery of high quality vocational rehabilitation services to all individuals with disabilities with priorities established for:

- Transition age youth
- Individuals residing in rural Alaska
- Individuals who experience blindness or who have a visual impairment
- Individuals who experience deafness or are hard of hearing

Progress is measured quarterly by the Policy, Planning, and Program Evaluation Unit through the case management system to determine number of individuals served, employment



outcomes, and achievement of performance indicators. This progress is updated internally using the working Strategic Plan document.

Staff development includes efforts in:

- Training opportunities to maintain professional certifications and for staff development
- Leadership development
- Succession planning

Progress is measured by completion of graduate degree programs and obtaining certification. DVR's Training Specialist tracks all employee training, including graduate degree education and ongoing training for employees. The Training Specialist also coordinates leadership development training for both Regional Managers and Counselors who may be interested in leadership in the future. The Training Specialist meets weekly with the Chief and Deputy Chief to ensure continued training is available throughout the year.

Organizational efficiencies and responsibilities:

- Meet all Federal regulations
- Report common performance measures
- Ensure case management software is up-to-date and will generate federal reporting that meets the requirements of the RSA-911 data report

Progress is measured by successful completion performance indicators as negotiated with Rehabilitation Services Administration and by successful quarterly data submission of the RSA-911 data report. The Policy, Planning, and Program Evaluation Unit meet weekly with the Chief to review performance and ensure DVR is meeting all Federal requirements.

DVR is part of the statewide workforce development and service delivery systems:

- DVR collaborates with other core WIOA agencies to improve the delivery of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services
- Advocate for individuals with disabilities on appropriate boards and committees

Progress is measured by successful coordination of activities with WIOA partners resulting in increased referrals, increased coordination of services to participants of the VR program, and appropriate competitive integrated employment outcomes. Advocacy will result in an increase of diversity, equity, and inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the workforce.

## 2. IDENTIFY THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IN CARRYING OUT THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

The goals and priorities that were developed for DVR's Strategic Plan beginning PY2020 through PY2023 include:

Goal 1: Service Delivery; DVR will deliver high quality vocational rehabilitation services to people with disabilities to assist them in obtaining employment consistent with their career goals.

- Priority 1.1: Improve employment outcomes to more closely align with high demand jobs
- Priority 1.2: Evaluate services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired
- Priority 1.3: Evaluate services to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing

- Priority 1.4: Enhance communication with Tribal Partners
- Priority 1.5: Continue to deliver Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)
- Priority 1.6: Improve usage and quality of CRP services in all regions
- Priority 1.7: Continue to provide quality services to rural locations
- Priority 1.8: Utilize “Employment First” initiative and increase Supported Employment opportunities.

Progress is measured by:

- Case reviews indicate IPEs align with labor market research.
- Managers will provide training opportunities.
- Employers in high demand industries will hire DVR participants.
- Staff have access to current job forecasts.
- Training program implemented for job developers.
- BEST will develop a one year plan with SMART goals and measures of success.
- BEP module is installed.
- Contractor to develop/edit current policies and administrative codes to ensure BEP compliance.
- Update equipment in needed BEP sites.
- Program evaluation is completed with recommendations for improvement.
- Evaluation completed with recommendations for improvement for deaf and hard of hearing.
- Hold roundtables to elicit information from community partners for deaf and hard of hearing.
- TVR Annual meeting occurs.
- Creation of a TVR communication plan.
- TVR MOU revised as necessary.
- Pre-ETS work experiences are available.
- Pre-ETS work experiences more closely mirror high demand job industries.
- Meet or exceed expected number of Pre-ETS students provided services.
- Additional CRPs are available to provide Pre-ETS services.
- Adherence to CRP timelines.
- Process developed and followed for new CRPs and determining corrective action plans.
- Employment First Coordinator is successful in making connections to enhance employment opportunities for Alaskans with disabilities.
- Increased successful Supported Employment cases.

- Increased Provisional Hire requests and placements.

Goal 2: Staff Development; DVR will recruit, employ, retain, and train the most qualified and highly skilled rehabilitation staff.

- Priority 2.1: Ensure resources are available for hiring and retaining qualified staff.
- Priority 2.2: Ensure on-going staff development and training
- Priority 2.3: Continue mentoring and succession planning

Progress is measured by:

- All staff training occurs.
- Internship positions are utilized.
- Communication to staff occurs.
- All non-CRC VRs have an Educational Development Plan.
- Training checklists are completed for all staff.
- Links are posted on SharePoint.
- Specialized training is developed and delivered.
- Opportunities are communicated to VRAs.
- Modules are updated and delivered.
- Quarterly training opportunities for staff is scheduled and available.
- Regional Manager Acting Status is delegated equally to senior VRs.
- Desk manuals for unique positions are created and easily accessible for successors.

Goal 3: Quality Assurance; DVR will continuously evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of organizational systems and identify opportunities to develop innovative solutions for necessary changes.

- Priority 3.1: Provide ongoing Quality Assurance (QA) and program evaluation activities to ensure integrity of VR Services
- Priority 3.2: DVR will meet or exceed state and federal common performance measures (CPMs)
- Priority 3.3: DVR will continue to update the Case Management System (AWARE) to provide quality data.
- Priority 3.4: Continue to support SARA communication system.
- Priority 3.5: Explore and improve technology usage.
- Priority 3.6: Review existing policies and procedures.

Progress is measured by:

- Internal documentation revised as necessary based on QA results.
- Staff training developed as deemed necessary based upon case review results.
- Results are shared with appropriate staff.

- Case reviews are completed and scheduled on a regular basis and incorporate internal controls.
- All staff are trained on new procedures.
- Regional Managers will have access and be able to run reports when needed.
- Staff meetings are scheduled with Help Desk Staff on an on-going basis.
- Position paper is completed.
- Negotiation with RSA completed.
- All required federal reporting submitted on time and is accurate.
- Schedule established for sending/receiving data from the National Clearinghouse.
- Meet or exceed State Missions and Measures.
- All AWARE updates are reviewed and installed as required.
- Federal reports are produced on-time and accurately. Staff are notified and trained on any changes to AWARE.
- Required data is collected accurately.
- DVR services are not negatively impacted
- RSA-911 edit issues are resolved.
- Plan for moving to paperless is established with timelines and costs.
- Policies and Procedures are available on SharePoint.
- SARA interface is fully functional.
- SARA use increased by 10% by all staff.
- BEP vendors use and respond to SARA notifications.
- Staff and CRPs use SARA for communication.
- SharePoint implemented and staff is trained on use.
- IT support is resolved.
- Text DVR number set up and functioning.
- New policies written and all staff is trained on the policies.
- Policies are posted publicly.
- New procedures are written and all staff is trained on the procedures.

Goal 4: Leadership in WIOA; DVR will provide leadership in the workforce development system.

- Priority 4.1: Improve communication between the WIOA partners.
- Priority 4.2: Increase OCS and DVR collaboration.
- Priority 4.3: Promote senior employment

Progress is measured by:

- Improved and increased communication, referrals, and cross agency collaboration.
- Improved and increased interdepartmental communication.
- At-Risk Youth scorecard developed and implemented to measure success.
- Activities and resources identified and carried out to improve senior employment.

### 3. ENSURE THAT THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES ARE BASED ON AN ANALYSIS OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

#### A. THE MOST RECENT COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT, INCLUDING ANY UPDATES;

The following priorities derived from the CSNA were incorporated into the Strategic Plan for 2020-2023:

- Providing services to those with the most significant disabilities and the supported employment population continues to be a challenge. Long-term supports have limited availability due to waiver waitlists.
- DVR's underserved population continues to be rural and remote populations. Finding service providers is especially difficult in rural and remote areas, which contributes to those populations being underserved. Additionally, DVR only has an itinerant presence in rural hubs.
- Engaging with WIOA partners to share resources, data, and participants to provide services to the population we serve continues to be an on-going project. DVR will need to continue to work closely with Job Centers.
- Continuing to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) will require working closely with Alaska Department of Education and Early Development to provide Pre-ETS to as many potentially eligible students as possible, both in urban and rural/remote areas.
- Using the existing data on labor and population trends, high demand job projections, and specific information on the economic health of Alaska, DVR can better target its efforts towards those employers and employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. This same data can also be used to identify those employment opportunities that may present the greatest challenges for both participants and employers. DVR's focus should be on those outcomes that present the best opportunities for success for both customers.
- DVR should continue to strengthen and expand Pre-ETS that more closely align with high demand employment opportunities and continue to work closely with the Alaska Department of Early Education Development to ensure that DVR services are a part of transition services in schools. In addition, the agency should expand outreach to students with disabilities to inform them of the training and career services that DVR offers.
- DVR should expand training and outreach to employers, particularly those in high demand industries. With the additional job developers on staff with DVR, developing better relations with employers will be an opportunity to provide training and education to employers across Alaska.

Beginning in March of 2020 through June of 2021, DVR provided VR Services via distance delivery due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to gauge effectiveness of remote services, DVR conducted two surveys of participants, one in October 2020 and in April 2021. Between both

surveys, DVR saw a response rate of 57%, indicating a significant portion of those surveyed responding. Results were as follows:

*Service related:*

- 78% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their counselor kept in contact with them at least once a month.
- 76% felt that they had a good relationship with their counselor
- 74% felt their counselor understood their concerns and needs related to COVID-19
- 68% were satisfied with the progress of their DVR case

*Barriers to accessing services:*

- 25% felt their skills did not match the jobs available
- 22% felt they needed training on how to use technology
- 17% were fearful of using services due to COVID-19
- 17% had family responsibilities increase due to COVID-19 (lack of childcare and school closed to in-person learning)
- 16% stated they did not have the technology necessary to access services (lack of internet, computer, and devices)
- 15% state they needed services they were unable to get (this did not include services from DVR)

*Comfort with technology:*

- 59% of respondents were comfortable with online meetings and preferred to continue meeting this way.
- 30% stated they preferred to meet in person
- 9% said they did not have the skills to meet online, but were willing to learn

*Job search status:*

- 14% stated they started their job search, but put it on hold due to COVID-19
- 14% stated they had not yet started their job search
- 13% had started job search but had not yet found a job
- 8% stated they were currently working

*Comfort with working:*

- 47% stated they were comfortable going to work
- 15% wanted to work, but were not sure it was safe for themselves or others in their household

DVR will conduct a similar survey in 2022 for the upcoming CSNA to determine participant current needs.

**B. THE STATE'S PERFORMANCE UNDER THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES OF SECTION 116 OF WIOA; AND**

DVR has collected baseline data on employment status at second and fourth quarter after exit as well as median wage at second quarter after exit from UI wage data. DVR is working on getting reliable data on educational attainment, measurable skill gain (MSG), and effectiveness in serving employers.

For PY19 and PY20, State VR programs reported performance across five indicators:

1. *MSG Rate* (participants during PY19 and PY20);
2. *Employment Rate in the Second Quarter after Exit* (participants who exited during PY18 and PY19);
3. *Median Earnings in the Second Quarter after Exit* (participants who exited during PY18 and PY19);
4. *Employment Rate in the Fourth Quarter after Exit* (participants who exited during PY18 and PY19); and
5. *Credential Attainment Rate* (participants who exited during PY18 and PY19)

Negotiated targets had not been enforced nor agreed upon for PY19 between RSA and DVR as baseline data was still being collected. DVR reported the following five indicators for PY19:

1. *MSG Rate* (participants during PY19) – 50.0%
2. *Employment Rate in the Second Quarter after Exit* (participants who exited during PY18) – 53.8%
3. *Median Earnings in the Second Quarter after Exit* (participants who exited during PY18) – \$4,510
4. *Employment Rate in the Fourth Quarter after Exit* (participants who exited during PY18) – 48.6%
5. *Credential Attainment Rate* (participants who exited during PY18) – Not collected for PY18

For PY20, DVR and RSA had agreed on their first negotiated target for MSG Rate at 21.0%. DVR exceeded the rate by achieving 61.3% MSG Rate. DVR reported the following five indicators for PY20:

1. *MSG Rate* (participants during PY20) – 61.3%
2. *Employment Rate in the Second Quarter after Exit* (participants who exited during PY19) – 51.6%
3. *Median Earnings in the Second Quarter after Exit* (participants who exited during PY19) – \$4,540
4. *Employment Rate in the Fourth Quarter after Exit* (participants who exited during PY19) – 47.6%
5. *Credential Attainment Rate* (participants who exited during PY19) – 45.5%

**C. OTHER AVAILABLE INFORMATION ON THE OPERATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE VR PROGRAM, INCLUDING ANY REPORTS RECEIVED FROM THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL AND FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MONITORING ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED UNDER SECTION 107.**

DVR's monitoring review was conducted in April 2018. In October of 2019, the draft report was reviewed by management. The findings that required corrective action were:

- Untimely development of the IPE;
- Policies relating to the provision of Pre-ETS services
- Internal controls must include procedures to ensure accurate data collection and financial accountability.
- Ensure SF425 and RSA17 (formerly RSA2) are accurate and that costs charged to the VR award are allowable and allocable.
- Finalize MOU and IFA for the State's local workforce area.

These corrective action items have been addressed over the last two years. All findings were resolved with RSA's State team on March 10, 2022, and RSA will continue to follow-up and provide technical assistance as needed.

The SVRC continues to publish an annual report, which helps shape policy by reviewing strategic planning, needs assessments, consumer satisfaction surveys, and ongoing program evaluation. The SVRC has not reported significant concerns regarding DVR's operation and effectiveness.

#### M. ORDER OF SELECTION

##### 1. WHETHER THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL IMPLEMENT AND ORDER OF SELECTION. IF SO, DESCRIBE:

##### A. THE ORDER TO BE FOLLOWED IN SELECTING ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS TO BE PROVIDED VR SERVICES

DVR is not on an Order of Selection.

##### B. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER

DVR is not on an Order of Selection.

##### C. THE SERVICE AND OUTCOME GOALS

DVR is not on an Order of Selection.

##### D. TIME WITHIN WHICH THESE GOALS MAY BE ACHIEVED FOR INDIVIDUALS IN EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY WITHIN THE ORDER; AND

DVR is not on an Order of Selection.

##### E. HOW INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES ARE SELECTED FOR SERVICES BEFORE ALL OTHER INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

DVR is not on an Order of Selection.

##### 2. IF THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT HAS ELECTED TO SERVE ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS, REGARDLESS OF ANY ESTABLISHED ORDER OF SELECTION, WHO REQUIRE SPECIFIC SERVICES OR EQUIPMENT TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT

DVR is not on an Order of Selection, however, DVR has always supported individuals who are at risk of losing their jobs due to a disability. If the Division was to implement an order of selection, DVR would serve individuals who required rapid services in order to maintain employment.

#### N. GOALS AND PLANS FOR DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS

##### 1. SPECIFY THE STATE'S GOALS AND PRIORITIES FOR FUNDS RECEIVED UNDER SECTION 603 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES



DVR's goals and priorities as outlined in the PY2019-2022 Strategic Plan include:

- Continuing to utilize 50 percent of SE funds for youth with the most significant disabilities.
- Providing ongoing support services to individuals with the most significant disabilities who are employed.
- Providing Extended Services to youth with the most significant disabilities who are employed.
- Continuing to collaborate with the Division of Employment and Training Services and the Alaska Workforce Investment Board regarding youth transition programs, especially those that serve at-risk youth, in the state.
- Partner with the Center for Human Development and the University of Alaska to expand postsecondary education opportunities to youth.
- Continue to collaborate with the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education and the Center for Human Development and distribute transition handbooks to multiple stakeholder groups.

Progress is measured quarterly by the Policy, Planning, and Program Evaluation Unit through the case management system to determine number of individuals served, services provided, employment outcomes, achievement of performance indicators, and expenditure of SE funds. This progress is monitored quarterly utilizing a working version of DVRs Strategic Plan. Specific DVR staff has been assigned responsibility of all implementation and monitoring of activities. Progress of goals and priorities are also measured by examination of activities to determine if DVR is achieving the outlined goals and priorities of coordination and collaboration.

DVR has not expended SE funds, however, is still providing SE services using General Program funds. DVR has a system developed to ensure that when SE funds are expended, 50 percent of those funds would be for youth with the most significant disabilities, including using funds for Extended Services for this population.

DVR is actively engaging with partners to improve employment outcomes for at-risk youth and improve access to postsecondary education opportunities, including comprehensive transition programs.

One of DVR's strongest partners in improving the provision of Supported Employment services is the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education. DVR and the GCDSE continuously update, and distribute, transition handbooks.

## 2. DESCRIBE THE ACTIVITIES TO BE CONDUCTED, WITH FUNDS RESERVED PURSUANT TO SECTION 603(D), FOR YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING:

### A. THE PROVISION OF EXTENDED SERVICES FOR A PERIOD NOT TO EXCEED 4 YEARS; AND

DVR Supported Employment funds will be used to provide the following activities to youth with the most significant disabilities:

- Ongoing job supports while the youth is employed.
- Extended services to ensure long-term supports are provided to maintain employment when the youth is unable to transition to long-term funding through other agencies.
- Extended services may be provided to a youth with a most significant disability for a period of up to 4 years, or until the individual turns 25 years of age.

DVR's cooperative agreement with Senior and Disability Services (SDS) specifically outlines collaboration and that the transition of an individual from DVR to waiver supports must occur at the time for which it is most appropriate for the individual, and they have achieved job stability.

**B. HOW THE STATE WILL LEVERAGE OTHER PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNDS TO INCREASE RESOURCES FOR EXTENDED SERVICES AND EXPANDED SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES.**

- Continue to increase the number of Community Work Incentives Coordinators (CWICs) through collaborative CWIC training opportunities.
- Work with the Center for Human Development, the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education, Senior and Disabilities Services, Division of Behavioral Health, and other partners to increase provider capacity for employment services and supports.
- Partner to disseminate information on resources available for people with disabilities to obtain and maintain employment through job fairs, conferences, and other events.
- Encourage natural supports, where appropriate, to ensure the maximum potential for success, especially in rural and remote areas.

**O. STATE'S STRATEGIES**

**1. THE METHODS TO BE USED TO EXPAND AND IMPROVE SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES**

DVR's overarching goals include:

- Deliver high quality vocational rehabilitation services to people with disabilities to assist them in obtaining employment consistent with their career goals.
- Recruit, employ, retain, and train the most qualified and highly skilled rehabilitation staff.
- Continuously evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of organizational systems and identify opportunities to develop innovative solutions for necessary changes
- Provide leadership in the workforce system.

These goals and corresponding activities will assure DVR is able to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities in the most effective and efficient manner.

DVR continues to actively accept feedback from the SVRC and through consumer satisfaction surveys to assure continuous improvement to all individuals with disabilities. DVR has continued to improve the quality of services provided to consumers by providing staff with ongoing training and education.

Additionally, DVR has developed in-house staff responsible for expanding DVRs presence in local communities for both employment opportunities and to increase referral sources as well. DVR attends all local job fairs whenever possible, the largest being the Veterans job fair every November. DVR staff frequently presents at partnership meetings across the state in order to increase referrals to the program in an effort to expand services across Alaska.

**2. HOW A BROAD RANGE OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES AND DEVICES WILL BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AT EACH STAGE OF THE REHABILITATION PROCESS AND ON A STATEWIDE BASIS**

The Division has a policy on Assistive Technology (AT) service delivery throughout the VR process. DVR has established an AT team that examines the use of AT throughout DVR for all individuals. Additionally, this team also looks at how AT can be used to deliver VR services to remote and rural Alaska. With the move of many workers into telework environments, AT has become more important than ever to employees with disabilities, making AT assessments critical for appropriate plan development.

### **3. THE OUTREACH PROCEDURES THAT WILL BE USED TO IDENTIFY AND SERVE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE MINORITIES, INCLUDING THOSE WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, AS WELL AS THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM**

DVR's most underserved population continues to be rural Alaskans. This has been an ongoing challenge for the Rural Services Team, as there are so few jobs and service providers in remote and rural communities. Employment opportunities are much more available in urban areas. The Rural Team strategizes ways to obtain more CRPs in rural areas, which are traditionally underserved. The Business Employment Services Team has been created specifically to provide outreach and training services to employers, with the goal of encouraging more businesses to provide employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

DVR has expanded services to Petersburg, Haines, and Prince of Wales Island due to an increased need in those communities and has increased the number of counselors within the agency who are providing rural services. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has had dire consequences across the globe, it forced many people to embrace technology in order to effectively communicate. In October 2020, DVR's Rural Services Lead Manager provided training to all staff on how to effectively provide distance counseling services to participants, since all services were being provided via distance.

DVR continues to partner with Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) programs to maximize effectiveness in rural/remote Alaska. Cases are referred from the local TVR entity and joint IPEs are developed as outlined in the Cooperative Agreement DVR has with the TVR Consortia. Travel to rural communities has been impacted by COVID-19 due to communities closing their "doors" to ensure the safety of their residents. DVR has been respectful of community restrictions and continues to partner with the local TVR programs in order to deliver services safely and effectively.

DVR has increased the number of CRPs serving rural Alaska through the provision of Pre-ETS. Work is ongoing in developing qualifications for rural CRPs, as it is difficult to find qualified CRPs in those areas. DVR has updated its website to include a resource page for CRPs. This includes an orientation presentation as well as training on ethics. Additionally, DVR's CRP Specialist works closely with existing CRPs monitoring quality of services and ensuring all required documentation is up to date.

### **4. THE METHODS TO BE USED TO IMPROVE AND EXPAND VR SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THE COORDINATION OF SERVICES DESIGNED TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF SUCH STUDENTS FROM SCHOOL TO POSTSECONDARY LIFE (INCLUDING THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES)**

DVR has created an impressive infrastructure for the delivery of Pre-ETS services and continues to develop new activities to provide students with disabilities the ability to see what their future could look like. DVR continues to expand its Pre-ETS into rural Alaska through increased coordination with Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in rural and remote location. Such examples include the Healthcare Career Connections and the expansion of the Pathways programs with Career and Technical Education.

Outreach efforts and strategic partnerships continue to benefit the expansion of Pre-ETS across the state. Based upon the 2016-2018 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), DVR set a target goal of serving 585 students with a disability annually. In PY2020 DVR served 543 students with disabilities in 53 communities across Alaska and expended just over \$1.06 million on Pre-Employment Transition Services.

The pandemic closed Alaska's schools to in-person learning in March 2020, typically the busiest time of year for the delivery of Pre-ETS. During the pandemic, providing Transition Camps to students required shifting to virtual delivery. In spring 2020, Alaska Transition Outreach Project (ATOP) produced a series of four Transition Tuesday events to complete the year on a high note. The success of this effort led to the creation of a joint DVR, DEED, and ATOP collaborative web platform, TransitionAlaska.org, for providing teachers and students with continuing development and training with recorded content and live webinars.

When school reopened in the spring of 2021, DVR continued to provide Pre-ETS through in-person activities and through the web platform. The unknowns that surrounded COVID-19 has resulted in reluctance from school districts to plan for in-person activities. While DVR continues to provide in-person Pre-ETS when possible, virtual delivery has proven effective in reaching a wider audience in urban, rural, and remote areas of the state. The spring 2021 Statewide Virtual Transition Camp had 50 participants, while the Fall 2021 Transition Camp had 136 students involved over 3 days of Pre-ETS activities through presentations by businesses, postsecondary education entities, and provided instruction in workplace readiness training.

CRPs have struggled to engage schools in coordinating Pre-ETS activities and recruiting students was difficult with schools closed to in-person learning. DVR conducted its 2020 summer work program at 50% of its typical capacity (112 students). During the spring and fall of 2020, successful CRPs were those who maintained relationships with schools and could offer a virtual or hybrid model of delivering services.

In fall 2021, schools returned to in-person learning, and DVR has benefited, seeing an increase in coordinating activities with schools. Both Transition Camps and in-school/after-school activities increased, however, activities have not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels. Virtual service delivery makes up 50% of all Pre-ETS activities currently being delivered.

DVR's Pre-Employment Transition Summer Work Program, identified as a promising practice by the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC), had continued to expand its reach every year prior to the pandemic. DVR was able to administer the Summer Work Program in 2020, though due to the pandemic, participation was only about 50% of normal levels with 112 students. The 2021 Summer Work Program saw participation return to pre-pandemic levels with 198 participants starting the program, however, retention of students in the program proved to be the most difficult aspect.

DVR continues to take advantage of new partnerships to leverage additional funds and resources to enhance its Pre-Employment Transition Services. "Explore" is a partnership between DVR and the University of Alaska, Southeast College of Career Education that provides students with disabilities hands-on exploration in several high demand, high wage career fields. During PY18, participation in DVR's Explore program had almost doubled from the year prior, with 65 participants. Explore PY19 was at capacity again with 65 students, while the PY20 and PY21 Explore programs were canceled due to the University's closure during the pandemic.

#### 5. IF APPLICABLE, PLANS FOR ESTABLISHING, DEVELOPING, OR IMPROVING COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE

Collaboration and partnership with the University of Alaska, Anchorage (UAA) to ensure ongoing training is available to CRPs throughout the state. UAA has gained national accreditation from the ACRE to provide employment services training. DVR requires CRPs

complete a minimum of 40 hours of ACRE accredited training to meet the minimum requirements to provide basic vocational rehabilitation services. Additional resources are provided for CRPs to obtain additional certifications to deliver advanced services.

#### 6. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE STATE WITH RESPECT TO THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA

For the accountability measures that involve quarterly wages and percentages, DVR has a data sharing agreement with DOLWD's Unemployment Insurance to obtain data and is able to report percentages and state wage data for adults and youth. However, DVR has not been able to obtain federal wage data, resulting in lower percentages of participants employed and lower overall wage data targets.

For the accountability measures involving education and credentialing, that information is proving to be much more difficult to obtain. DVR was working to establish the relationship with education that will allow for sharing the schooling/credentialing data, but RSA is requiring only grades or transcripts. DVR is changing internal processes to give counselors direction on how to best obtain this documentation. For education and training being paid through DVR, that information is readily available and will be collected and reported. However, the level of detail that is being required for secondary education does impose a burden of additional staff time to provide that data. Even if this data can be obtained, the work involved in collection and entering into the reporting system is extremely burdensome.

Wages are collected each quarter via an interface between the DVR's case management system and Unemployment Insurance's (UI)'s wage system. DVR utilizes the Ticket Tracker software which identifies all DVR participants from the previous quarter that had an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). These records are pulled quarterly by DVR staff and temporarily placed into an interface holding area until UI wages are received. After wages are received (usually the eighth day of the month), DVR staff imports those records back into their case management system, AWARE. The case services report, RSA-911, includes participant wages as a result from this process. It should be noted that this process does not include wages earned from participants that achieved competitive integrated employment in the Public sector (Federal wages) nor Self-Employed individuals.

The service to employers metric has been determined and DVR is working with our state WIOA partners to combine all our data for reporting.

In addition, DVR has developed, through SARA, the capability to match participants between WIOA programs to show who is participating in other DOLWD core programs.

#### 7. STRATEGIES FOR ASSISTING OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM IN ASSISTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

As outlined in DVR's 2020 Strategic Plan under the goal to provide leadership in the workforce development system DVR will:

- Continue to remain co-located in four Alaska Job Centers (AJCs).
- Increase collaboration and integrated service delivery with AJCs including monthly meetings between Job Center Managers and Regional Managers.
- Under Section 188, AJC Universal Access, ensure physical and communication accessibility, program accessibility, AT, and AJC staff training is adequate to serve the needs of individuals with disabilities.
- DVR and AJCs have a shared Co-Enrollment policy to ensure services to individuals are maximized effectively.

- Continue to work with the Alaska Workforce Investment Board's (AWIB) At-Risk Youth staff to provide services to youth with disabilities.

Additionally, the DVR Director is the Department of Labor and Workforce Development's (DOLWD) representative on the AWIB.

#### 8. HOW THE AGENCY'S STRATEGIES WILL BE USED TO:

##### A. ACHIEVE GOALS AND PRIORITIES BY THE STATE, CONSISTENT WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT;

DVRs 2020 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) identified gaps in services that shaped the 2020 Strategic Plan and the goals and priorities for the next three years. DVR Leadership determined the following goals and strategies to assist in filling the gaps identified in the CSNA.

- Deliver high quality vocational rehabilitation services to people with disabilities to assist them in obtaining employment consistent with their career goals.
- Recruit, employ, retain, and train the most qualified and highly skilled rehabilitation staff.
- Continuously evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of organizational systems and identify opportunities to develop innovative solutions for necessary changes
- Provide leadership in the workforce system.

These goals and activities listed to achieve these goals will assure DVR is able to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities.

Additionally, DVR will:

- Build clear paths for students, youth, and adults to careers.
- Sponsor transition camps throughout Alaska.
- Contract with CRPs to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services to students ages 14–21, or younger if transition services are determined necessary by the IEP team.
- Work with Special Education teachers to ensure appropriate referrals.
- Provide outreach to alternative schools and youth correctional facilities.
- Develop multiple paths to access services for employers and workers.
- Increase outreach to employers.
- Work with BEST to survey needs and gaps for improved partnerships with employers. Develop training module to ensure staff captures and documents services to employers once final regulations are published with definitions of "services."
- Support and grow learning opportunities for workers at all stages of life.
- Work closely and collaborate with AJCs to ensure a smooth referral process between each entity.
- Work closely with and collaborate with the other core programs to ensure a smooth referral process between programs.
- Continue to improve outreach to rural areas.

- Maximize training opportunities by collaborating with other core programs.
- Maintain representation on statewide boards like AWIB, the Alaska Mental Health Trust, and the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education to ensure people with disabilities continue to have a voice in developing learning opportunities.
- Improve the efficiency and performance of Alaska's workforce system.
- Collaborate with statewide data group to develop streamlined enrollment processes across all core programs.
- Refine referral process to enhance co-investment opportunities between core programs.
- Meet or exceed negotiated performance measure targets.

#### B. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES; AND

- Develop portable, electronic training modules to provide information to employers, based on survey results of needs and gaps.
- Collaborate with statewide data group to develop streamlined enrollment processes across all core programs.
- Continue to provide funding to the Alaska's State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee (State Rehabilitation Council).

#### C. OVERCOME IDENTIFIED BARRIERS RELATING TO EQUITABLE ACCESS TO AND PARTICIPATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM AND THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM.

The largest barrier to equitable access is due to the remoteness of Alaskan communities and limited resources. DVR partners with school districts, Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Services programs, WIOA core programs, and other local partners in designated hub communities throughout Alaska. Through coordination of services with these partners, DVR can provide VR services to individuals living throughout rural Alaska. Funding related to the COVID-19 pandemic has created opportunities for rural and remote communities to improve broadband capabilities, which will in turn, create more equitable access throughout Alaska for individuals with disabilities.

Additionally, DVR has a Rural Services Team that is constantly examining methods for improving service delivery to Alaskans with disabilities residing in rural and remote communities. DVR is also committed to continued efforts to develop CRP capacity in rural Alaska, as well as implementing innovative strategies using Assistive Technology to enhance and encourage continued consumer participation throughout the VR process.

Other barriers include lack of service providers, or lack of availability of services due to existing providers being overwhelmed with the number of individuals currently being served. Many of the Supported Employment providers in the state are declining new participants due to staffing and/or capacity issues. It is expected this trend will continue, as Alaska's resources are strained due to the ongoing impact of the pandemic.

#### P. EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS: VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS

1. AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE VR PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE APPROVED VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN FOR THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED PROGRAM YEAR WERE ACHIEVED. THE EVALUATION MUST:

##### A. IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS

Goal 1 – Service Delivery: DVR will deliver high quality vocational rehabilitation services for people with disabilities to assist them in obtaining employment consistent with their career goals.

This goal reflects DVR’s continued focus on improving the VR service delivery system with the needs of Alaskans with disabilities as identified by the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA).

Priority 1.1: Improve employment outcomes to more closely align with high demand jobs.

*Strategies:*

- Review Labor Market Research protocol to ensure validity.
- Ensure Labor Market Research is occurring in cases at IPE development when appropriate.
- Train field staff on career pathways and expectations for employment and training outcomes.
- Utilize all training opportunities (i.e., AVTEC, UAA, UAF, and UAS, apprenticeships, etc.) by educating staff on the opportunities available.
- Engage with AVTEC to ensure staff recognize the opportunities offered.
- Work with employers to ensure opportunities for DVR participants to succeed in high demand jobs.
- Work with DOLWD Research and Analysis to ensure staff have access to the most current job forecasts by developing a distribution plan for “Trends” economic forecast magazine, economic development corporation info, etc.
- BEST will develop one-year plan for employer engagement and measuring success.
- Provide training to in-house job developers.
  - Develop YouTube channel – with clips that the Business Engagement Services Team (BEST) can bring to employers, show ADA information, positive examples and experiences from other employers.
  - Develop standardized outreach materials for employers.
  - Develop standardized FAQs to be publicly available.

*Performance Indicators:*

- Case reviews indicate IPEs align with labor market research.
- Managers will provide training opportunities.
- Employers in high demand industries will hire DVR participants.
- Staff have access to current job forecasts.
- Training program implemented for job developers.
- BEST will develop a one year plan with SMART goals and measures of success.

Priority 1.2: Evaluate services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

*Strategies:*



- Update software and procedures for Business Enterprise Program (BEP).
- Update policies and administrative codes where necessary to ensure BEP meets all regulatory requirements.
- Modernize existing sites Micro-Markets.
- Evaluate current program to determine gaps and improvements that can be made to better serve this population.
- Inform all regional offices about the BEP program and opportunities for referrals.

*Performance Indicators:*

- BEP module is installed.
- Contractor to develop/edit current policies and administrative codes to ensure BEP compliance.
- Update equipment in needed sites.
- Program evaluation is completed with recommendations for improvement.

Priority 1.3: Evaluate services to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

*Strategies:*

- Evaluate current program to determine gaps and improvements that can be made to better serve this population.

*Performance Indicators:*

- Evaluation completed with recommendations for improvement.
- Hold roundtables to elicit information from community partners.

Priority 1.4: Enhance Communication with Tribal Partners

*Strategies:*

- Hold annual face-to-face meeting.
- Create communication plan to increase referrals and shared cases.
  - Identify contact in each region to share information and communicate information.
  - Identify clear chain for command for reporting issues.
  - Review MOU and Contingency Plan and draft changes as agreed upon.

*Performance Indicators:*

- Annual meeting occurs.
- Creation of a communication plan.
- MOU revised as necessary.

Priority 1.5: Continue to deliver Pre-Employment Transition Services

*Strategies:*

- Increase work experience activities and sites.

- Work closely with CRPs and Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) vendors to align work experiences with high demand jobs.
- Ensure that expected number of students participating in Pre-ETS matches CSNA goal.
- Continue to recruit CRPs to provide Pre-ETS services.
- Continue to ensure At-Risk-Youth are included in Pre-ETS activities.

*Performance Indicators:*

- Additional work experiences are available.
- Work experiences more closely mirror high demand job industries.
- Meet or exceed expected number of Pre-ETS students provided services.
- Additional CRPs are available to provide Pre-ETS services.

Priority 1.6: Improve usage and quality assurance of CRP services in all regions.

*Strategies:*

- Work with CRP Coordinator to develop a comprehensive CRP monitoring plan.
- Ensure Managers are involved in vetting new CRP applicants and in creating corrective action plans.
- Use software to improve service delivery.

*Performance Indicators:*

- Adherence to timelines.
- Process developed and followed for new CRPs and determining corrective action plans.

Priority 1.7: Continue to provide quality services to rural locations.

*Strategies:*

- Continue to support VRC travel to rural locations.
- Develop rural travel expectations to ensure staff time is effectively utilized.
- Expand services to underserved hubs.
- Attend events such as Alaska Federation of Natives, Native Youth Olympics, Southcentral Foundation Health Fairs, etc., to market DVR services.
- Invite TVR representation to attend rural services meeting.
- Expand use of technology in rural areas.

*Performance Indicators:*

- Travel approved for a minimum of two trips a year to rural areas.
- Travel expectations document is used and adhered to.
- More utilization of rural hubs for reaching rural participants.
- TVR representation at Rural Services meeting.
- Technology implemented.

### Priority 1.8: Utilize “Employment First” initiative

#### *Strategies:*

- Hire an Employment First Coordinator.
- Increase Supported Employment opportunities.
- Increase use of Provisional Hire within the State.
  - Include training at the hiring manager level.
  - Meet with other division directors to train on the Provisional Hire process.
  - Adapt AWARE work status to include Provisional Hire as an option.
  - Create links to include Provisional Hire opportunities when new positions post.
- Use Job Ready consistently in all regions and provide training.

#### *Performance Indicators:*

- Employment First Coordinator is successful in making connections to enhance employment opportunities for Alaskans with disabilities.
- Increased successful Supported Employment cases.
- Increased Provisional Hire requests and placements.

Goal 2 – Staff Development: DVR will recruit, employ, retain and train the most qualified and highly skilled rehabilitation staff.

This goal reflects the value DVR places on well trained staff and the serious need for succession planning with the anticipated loss of key staff in the future.

### Priority 2.1: Ensure resources are available for hiring and retaining qualified staff

#### *Strategies:*

- Schedule “all-staff” training sessions for professional staff when feasible.
- Utilize internship programs.
- Expand recruitment strategies to fill both VRC and VRA vacancies.
- Ensure all staff are aware of continuing education and advancement opportunities.
- Develop educational development plans for non-CRC VRCs.
- Ensure all VRAs receive VRA Online Training.

#### *Performance Indicators:*

- All staff training occurs.
- Internship positions are utilized.
- Communication to staff occurs.
- All non-CRC VRCs have an Educational Development Plan.
- Training checklists are completed for all staff.

### Priority 2.2: Ensure ongoing staff development and training

*Strategies:*

- Provide links to training on technology Microsoft Office, Outlook, basic computer training.
- Provide specialized training: Field Administrative Support Team (FAST), BEST, Blind Services, Deaf/Hard of Hearing, Division Statewide Assessment Team (DSAT), etc.
- Provide ongoing training opportunities for VRAs.
- Rewrite modules for VRC training.
- Develop ongoing education for eligibilities, severity of disability, plans, closures, etc.
- Regional Managers provide training on software and reporting.

*Performance Indicators:*

- Links are posted on SharePoint.
- Specialized training is developed and delivered.
- Opportunities are communicated to VRAs.
- Modules are updated and delivered.
- Quarterly training opportunities for staff is scheduled and available.

Priority 2.3: Continue mentoring and succession planning

*Strategies:*

- Senior VRCs (CRCs) are given opportunities to be in Regional Manager acting status.
- Develop specialized desk manuals for unique job duties.

*Performance Indicators:*

- Regional Manager Acting Status is delegated equally to senior VRCs.
- Desk manuals for unique positions are created and easily accessible for successors.

Goal 3 – Quality Assurance: DVR will continuously evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of organizational systems and identify opportunities to develop innovative solutions for necessary changes

This goal reflects DVR's commitment to continual improvement and efficiency.

Priority 3.1: Provide on-going Quality Assurance (QA) and program evaluation activities to ensure integrity of VR Services

*Strategies:*

- Program evaluation results are reviewed by administrative and management staff.
- Consumer satisfaction responses are analyzed and disseminated to SVRC on a quarterly basis and sent to Managers monthly.
- Internal case review process and tool is developed and implemented.
- Case reviews are both qualitative and quantitative in nature.
- Develop internal controls that ensure fidelity and accuracy of data submitted to RSA.

- Create reports in Tableau for Managers to review cases frequently.
- Help Desk staff will provide on-going support and training by participating in monthly staff meetings and flying to Fairbanks and Juneau semi-annually to meet with staff.
- Develop position paper by February 2020, on the importance of face-to-face case reviews.

*Performance Indicators:*

- Internal documentation revised as necessary based on QA results.
- Staff training developed as deemed necessary based upon case review results.
- Results are shared with appropriate staff.
- Case reviews are completed and scheduled on a regular basis and incorporate internal controls.
- All staff are trained on new procedures.
- Regional Managers will have access and be able to run reports when needed.
- Staff meetings are scheduled with Help Desk Staff on an on-going basis.
- Position paper is completed.

Priority 3.2: DVR will meet or exceed state and federal common performance measures (CPMs)

*Strategies:*

- Establish baseline data for all WIOA required data elements and negotiate with RSA on required CPMs.
- Monitor data collection processes to ensure program fidelity.
- Work with National Clearinghouse to obtain additional education information.
- Work with Leadership to determine appropriate State Goals known as Missions & Measures.

*Performance Indicators:*

- Negotiation with RSA completed.
- All required federal reporting submitted on time and is accurate.
- Schedule established for sending/receiving data from the National Clearinghouse.
- Meet or exceed State Missions and Measures.

Priority 3.3: Continue to update the AWARE case management system to provide quality data

*Strategies:*

- Help Desk team actively participates in all AWARE user groups and Community of Practice group to ensure DVR's work flows are considered when Alliance is creating enhancements to the software.
- Help Desk team meet and thoroughly analyze impact to field and accounting staff with each iteration of RSA-911 data manual, upgrades to the AWARE system, or clarification of current regulations by RSA.

- Help Desk team works with the management team to ensure on-going, accurate data collection by field staff.
- Help Desk team coordinates all training of field and other staff and provides training in timely manner.
- Help Desk team routinely runs QA on AWARE data to ensure accuracy and consistency.
- Policy, Planning and Program Evaluation team (PP&P) to evaluate processes for moving to a paperless system. This includes hardware and software purchases that may be necessary and staff training.
- Incorporate SharePoint in all policy and procedure development.

*Performance Indicators:*

- All AWARE updates are reviewed and installed as required.
- Federal reports are produced on-time and accurately. Staff are notified and trained on any changes to AWARE.
- Required data is collected accurately.
- DVR services are not negatively impacted
- RSA-911 edit issues are resolved.
- Plan for moving to paperless is established with timelines and costs.
- Policies and Procedures are available on SharePoint.

Priority 3.4: Continue to support SARA communication system

*Strategies:*

- Help Desk staff will continue support and provide training for SARA.
- Increase SARA usage 10% by staff over the next 6 months.
- Incorporate BEP vendors into SARA and provide training to the vendors.
- Incorporate CRPs into SARA.

*Performance Indicators:*

- SARA interface is fully functional.
- SARA use increased by 10% by all staff.
- BEP vendors use and respond to SARA notifications.
- Staff and CRPs use SARA for communication.

Priority 3.5: Explore and improve technology usage

*Strategies:*

- Replace current Intranet by implementing SharePoint and training staff.
- Explore internal IT staff possibility.
- Set up a "Text DVR" number for anyone to request additional information about DVR to increase outreach.

*Performance Indicators:*

- SharePoint implemented and staff is trained on use.
- IT support is resolved.
- Text DVR number set up and functioning.

Priority 3.6: Review existing Policies and Procedures

*Strategies:*

- Revise existing policies.
- Obtain SVRC approval on policies related to service delivery.
- Revise related procedures.

*Performance Indicators:*

- New policies written and all staff is trained on the policies.
- Policies are posted publicly.
- New procedures are written and all staff is trained on the procedures.

Goal 4 – Leadership in WIOA: DVR will provide leadership in the workforce development system

This goal is intended to strengthen DVR's connection to other programs that serve individuals with disabilities.

Priority 4.1: Improve communication between the WIOA partners

*Strategies:*

- Develop structured communication plan with Division of Employment and Training Services (DETS).
- Develop structured communication plan with the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD).

*Performance Indicators*

- Improved and increased communication, referrals, and cross agency collaboration.
- Improved and increased interdepartmental communication.

Priority 4.2: Increase Office of Children's Services and DVR Collaboration

*Strategies:*

- Create a scorecard for serving the At-Risk-Youth population to determine baseline and progress.

*Performance Indicators*

- Scorecard developed and implemented to measure success.

Priority 4.3: Promote Senior Employment

*Strategies:*

- Promote senior employment by forming a standing committee between DETS and DVR to determine activities to improve senior employment rates.

*Performance Indicators*

- Activities and resources identified and carried out to improve this rate.

**B. DESCRIBE THE FACTORS THAT IMPEDED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES**

Goal 1 – Service Delivery: DVR will deliver high quality vocational rehabilitation services to people with disabilities to assist them in obtaining employment consistent with their career goals.

Priority 1.1: Improve employment outcomes to more closely align with high demand jobs.

*Factors impeding progress:*

- Universities moved to online learning due to the pandemic.
- AVTEC limitations during pandemic.
- High demand jobs, such as healthcare, became more at-risk environments for individuals with disabilities.
- Economic challenges caused by the pandemic such as business failure and worker shortages.
- Reduced applications for VR services.

Priority 1.2: Evaluate services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired

*Factors impeding progress:*

- COVID-19 significantly impacted the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) as many federal and state facilities moved to telework, reducing foot traffic at all BEP sites.
- Lack of training for staff providing services to individuals who are blind.

Priority 1.3: Evaluate services to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

*Factors impeding progress:*

- DVR currently has a vacant Statewide Coordinator for the Deaf Counselor position.
- Mental health services available to this population are scarce in Alaska.

Priority 1.4: Enhance communication with Tribal Partners.

*Factors impeding progress:*

- Communities closed to visitors due to the pandemic, restricting travel to rural areas where TVR programs are mainly located.
- TVR programs struggle with broadband issues making videoconferencing difficult.

Priority 1.5: Continue to deliver Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS).

*Factors impeding progress:*

- Schools closed to in-person learning March 2020 – March 2021, making delivery of Pre-ETS difficult.



- Teachers reporting having to focus on behavioral issues stemming from students being at home during the pandemic.
- Summer Work Program 2020 significantly impacted by the pandemic.
- Planning future activities is difficult, schools are reluctant to commit to coordination.
- Lack of trained providers in rural areas.

Priority 1.6: Improve usage and quality of CRP services in all regions.

*Factors impeding progress:*

- CRPs service delivery was significantly impacted at the beginning of the pandemic.
- Development of new CRPs has been challenging given the instability of the economy.
- SDS now requires Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) training, making available slots limited for DVR CRPs.
- Difficult to hire CRPs, it has become less lucrative.
- Many areas of the state are underserved by CRPs, making it difficult to recruit and retain CRPs.

Priority 1.7: Continue to provide quality services to rural locations.

*Factors impeding progress:*

- Travel restrictions were initiated in almost all rural communities to keep community members safe.
- Annual events, such as Alaska Federation of Natives meeting have shifted to virtual, making DVR attendance difficult.
- Geographical size of the state.
- Lack of service providers.
- Lack of employment opportunities in rural Alaska.

Priority 1.8: Utilize “Employment First” initiative.

*Factors impeding progress:*

- State of Alaska Hiring managers still do not fully understand, nor utilize, Provisional Hire.
- Supported Employment work sites were limited due to the pandemic.

Goal 2 – Staff Development: DVR will recruit, employ, retain, and train the most qualified and highly skilled rehabilitation staff.

Priority 2.1: Ensure resources are available for hiring and retaining qualified staff.

*Factors impeding progress:*

- Lack of Rehabilitation Counseling program in Alaska.
- State Government positions are not as desirable as they once were.
- Paraprofessional (VRA) positions are difficult to fill as they are lower paying positions.

- Periodic hiring freezes impact recruiting.

Priority 2.2: Ensure on-going staff development and training

*Factors impeding progress:*

- Due to the pandemic all training has shifted to videoconference, reducing face-to-face interaction amongst staff.

Priority 2.3: Continue mentoring and succession planning.

*Factors impeding progress:*

- Lack of availability of local leadership training.
- Staff turnover.

Goal 3 – Quality Assurance: DVR will continuously evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of organizational systems and identify opportunities to develop innovative solutions for necessary changes.

Priority 3.1: Provide ongoing Quality Assurance (QA) and program evaluation activities to ensure integrity of VR Services.

*Factors impeding progress:*

- Case review process had to be revamped using the SurveyMonkey platform to allow for case reviews via distance.
- IT issues have precluded the use of Tableau as planned.
- 100% staff turnover in the Policy, Planning, and Program evaluation unit beginning May 2020.

Priority 3.2: DVR will meet or exceed state and federal common performance measures (CPMs).

*Factors impeding progress:*

- Still capturing baseline data. Performance measures have not yet been established for all areas except MSGs.

Priority 3.3: DVR will continue to update the Case Management System (AWARE) to provide quality data.

*Factors impeding progress:*

- Office of Information Technology (OIT) staff turnover.

Priority 3.4: Continue to support SARA communication system.

*Factors impeding progress:*

- OIT staff turnover.
- System is not being fully utilized.
- DVR staff turnover.

Priority 3.5: Explore and improve technology usage.

*Factors impeding progress:*

- Connectivity to rural areas is impacted by broadband limitations.

Priority 3.6: Review existing policies and procedures.

*Factors impeding progress:*

- Staff availability is limited due to multiple competing priorities, however, over half of the policies and procedures have been updated.

Goal 4 – Leadership in WIOA: DVR will provide leadership in the workforce development system.

Priority 4.1: Improve communication between the WIOA partners

*Factors impeding progress:*

- Shift in priorities for the workforce development system due to the pandemic. Initiatives were halted as divisions reacted to distance delivery and telework.

Priority 4.2: Increase OCS and DVR collaboration.

*Factors impeding progress:*

- OCS staff turnover.
- Lack of access to youth due to the pandemic and safety precautions.

Priority 4.3: Promote senior employment

*Factors impeding progress:*

- As a population determined to be more vulnerable to the adverse effects of COVID-19, seniors were less likely to pursue competitive integrated employment. Due to access to vaccinations and boosters, this trend is shifting back towards pre-pandemic levels.

2. AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SUPPLEMENT FOR THE MOST RECENT PROGRAM YEAR WERE ACHIEVED. THE EVALUATION MUST:

A. IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS

Goals for DVR's Supported Employment Program:

- DVR will assist 50 SE eligible individuals to obtain competitive employment annually.
- DVR will provide all the identified required VR services to all SE eligible individuals.
- DVR will explore opportunities for CRPs and other entities to become employment networks to provide long-term supports.
- DVR will work with mental health systems to increase and establish work-related programs within those systems.
- Emphasize community-based, integrated employment settings with the Governor's Council on Disability and Special Education, the Alaska Mental Health Board, community behavioral health programs, and the Alaska Mental Health Trust to increase vocational programs within the mental health service delivery system.

PY19 FY20 Supported Employment Program Outcomes:

- DVR provided VR services under an IPE to 121 SE eligible individuals, of which 53 were youth.

- DVR successfully assisted 54 SE eligible individuals in obtaining competitive employment, of which 25 were youth.
- DVR was not on an order of selection and had adequate funding and staff to provide SE services to all eligible individuals.

**PY20 FY21 Supported Employment Program Outcomes:**

- DVR provided VR services under an IPE to 79 SE eligible individuals, of which 36 were youth.
- DVR successfully assisted 28 SE eligible individuals in obtaining competitive employment, of which 13 were youth.
- DVR was not on an order of selection and had adequate funding and staff to provide SE services to all eligible individuals.

*Strategies contributing to success:*

- Continued efforts with the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education.
- Continuing to work with the Center for Human Development and the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority to increase provider capacity for supported employment services and supports.
- Piloting the Individual Placement and Support model with Division of Behavioral Health.
- Utilization of Project Search in three large hospitals in Alaska (halted in 2020 due to pandemic).
- Utilization of the Tapestry Program at University of Alaska, Anchorage.
- Pre-ETS Summer Work Program with The Arc of Anchorage.
- SDS/DVR Taskforce meetings.
- SDS/DVR Crosswalk document.
- Supported Employment policy outlining use of Extended Services.
- Continued to increase use of the Provisional Hire process.
- DVR staff training on Home and Community Based Waiver Programs.
- DVR staff training on 1115 Waiver services.
- Business Engagement Services Team (BEST) working with employers to expand community work experiences.
- Alaska is an Employment First state.

Through the cooperative agreement, SDS delivered training to DVR staff across the state to ensure both service providers and DVR staff understand the best way to develop plans of care and IPEs. DVR and SDS have agreed that all individuals are unique in the services they require to obtain employment and that the provision of services and the responsible entity for funding is not prescriptive nor arbitrary. This will result in thoughtful IPEs that give full consideration to each individual's needs, including extended supports for youth. DVR continues to set aside 50% of Title VI, Part B funds for the provision of SE services to youth with the most significant disabilities.

## B. DESCRIBE THE FACTORS THAT IMPEDED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

### *Factors impeding progress:*

- Level of funding for I/DD Home and Community Based Services.
- Funding to Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS) is being reduced while the cost of plans of care continue to increase.
- Waiver waitlist has increased substantially.
- Healthcare system and services have been strained significantly due to the pandemic.
- Service providers are not accepting new individuals due to operating at capacity.
- High traffic work environments and essential workers became at-risk for individuals with disabilities during the pandemic, making individuals hesitant to seek employment.
- During phases of lock-downs, Job Coaches were unable to accompany employees to worksites.
- Reduced number of Supported Employment applications.

### 3. THE VR PROGRAM'S PERFORMANCE ON THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA

DVR has only reported on one, Measurable Skills Gains (MSG), of the six performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA. DVR will work with Rehabilitation Services Administration to determine negotiated target goals for the remaining four accountability indicators. DVR has data sharing agreements with DOLWD's Unemployment Insurance and Research and Analysis units to establish the data collection necessary for determining baseline indicators and future reporting.

Program Year 20 (7/1/2020 – 6/30/2021) marks the first year DVR reported on RSA's negotiated measure, Measurable Skills Gains (MSG). Rates negotiated for this measure were 21% for PY20, 22% for PY21, and 23% for PY22. The remaining performance measure are still in the baseline data phase.

#### Performance Measure 1: Employment Rate - 2nd quarter after exit.

- DVR has a data sharing agreement with UI but has no mechanism to obtain wage/employment data for federal employees.
- Baseline data is still being collected by RSA on this measure.
- Employment Rate for PY19, 2nd quarter after exit was 51.6%.

#### Performance Measure 2: Employment Rate - 4th quarter after exit.

- DVR has a data sharing agreement with UI but has no mechanism to obtain wage/employment data for federal employees.
- Baseline data is still being collected by RSA on this measure.
- Employment Rate for Calendar Year 19, 4th quarter after exit was 47.6%.

#### Performance Measure 3: Median Earnings - 2nd quarter after exit.

- DVR has a data sharing agreement with UI but has no mechanism to obtain wage/employment data for federal employees.

- Baseline data is still being collected by RSA on this measure.
- The median earnings for participants in PY19 was \$4,540, however, federal wages is not included in this amount.

Performance Measure 4: Credential Attainment Rate (within 1 year of exit).

- DVR is utilizing SARA, a text messaging software, to automatically send out requests for additional educational attainment after exit.
- Baseline data is still being collected by RSA on this measure.
- Calendar Year 19 yielded 41.5% for DVR's Credential Attainment Rate.

Performance Measure 5: Measurable Skills Gains (MSG).

- DVR will be negotiating this measure with RSA and will indicate that CPM in the Appendix.
- PY20 had its first negotiated Measurable Skills Gains rate targeted at 21%. DVR successfully achieved this goal by attaining a 61.3% MSG rate.
- PY21 is in process and DVR's negotiated rate with RSA is 22%.
- PY22 has a 23% MSG rate negotiated with RSA.

Performance measure 6: Effectiveness in Serving Employers.

- DVR has established the effectiveness measures with the other WIOA state partners and have been reporting this as a combined measure.
- Baseline data is still being collected by RSA for PY20 and PY21. The methodology of collecting this data is still being developed by RSA. Until guidance is update on the data collection process of Effectiveness in Serving Employers, DVR will continue to submit this data with our WIOA state partners.
- DVR provided 200 employer services in PY20.

#### 4. HOW THE FUNDS RESERVED FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION (I&E) ACTIVITIES WERE UTILIZED

DVR sets aside a portion of funds allotted under Section 110 of the Act for development and implementation of innovative approaches to improve the provision of VR services, particularly for individuals with the most significant disabilities. For PY2018 through PY2021, DVR will use these funds primarily to support State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee (SVRC). The SVRC is a full and active partner in the development of agency policies, regulations, and procedures. The SVRC collaborates with DVR to hold public meetings in different areas around the state each year. These meetings are another way for DVR to identify needs and to gather trend information for strategic planning.

DVR had supported the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) previously; however, the administration of the SILC has been moved to Senior and Disabilities Services, who has assumed the responsibility to fully fund the SILC beginning in PY2021. The Transition Coordinator for DVR is a member of the SILC and participates in the development of the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL).

Innovation and Expansion Activities for PY2020:

- Support of the SRC: \$ 7,876 (actual expenditures were lower than budgeted due to COVID and conferences and meetings being held virtually)

- Support of the SILC: \$ 60,000

Innovation and Expansion Activities budgeted for PY2021:

- Support of the SRC: \$ 38,590 (budgeted amount)
- Support of the SILC: \$ 0

## Q. QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

### 1. THE QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES

DVR will provide Supported Employment (SE) services to eligible individuals and will set aside 50 percent of the SE award to provide services to youth with the most significant disabilities.

SE services can be provided to any individual if that individual has been determined eligible for VR services, has a most significant disability, and for whom SE has been identified as the appropriate service delivery method on the basis of a comprehensive assessment of rehabilitation needs.

Supported Employment has been referred to as a 'place and train' model, whether with job coaches or through natural supports. Individuals who may not possess all the necessary work or social skills required for immediate employment success are placed into employment. The 'place and train' model matches individuals to jobs that are consistent with their unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice. Placement is more rapid as there is no delay due to pre-placement training or skill requirements; however, vocational assessment activities should still occur to help determine the most appropriate vocational goal.

Providers develop the best job match for an individual, using flexible strategies to meet the individual's needs and the employer's unmet business needs. Providers then provide ongoing supports and training at the work site on the specific skills and/or behaviors required for the job so that the individual can develop the skills needed to maintain long-term employment with the use of Extended Services.

DVR will provide Ongoing Support Services to individuals with the most significant disabilities. Ongoing Support Services are time-limited services, up to a maximum of 24 months, which are identified and included on an Individualized Plan for Employment. Comparable benefits for Ongoing Support Services are taken into consideration, and if no other funding source is available, are funded by ADVR from the time of job placement until the transition to Extended Services. Ongoing Support Services shall include an assessment of employment stability and provision and coordination of specific services at or away from the worksite that are needed in order for the individual to maintain stability. This is based on a minimum of twice-monthly monitoring at the worksite of an individual, or if under specific circumstances, off-site monitoring. Offsite monitoring may occur at the request of the individual, but meetings between the individual and the counselor should occur at least twice a month.

### 2. THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES

Extended Services are long-term support services and other appropriate services that are needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability (including a youth with a most significant disability) in supported employment. They are provided and funded by an entity or person other than DVR, which may include Senior and Disabilities Services, mental health providers, private nonprofit organizations, the employer/co-workers, or any other appropriate resource including family members. When no other funding source is available, DVR may fund Extended Services for a youth with a most significant disability for a

period of time not to exceed four years, or until such time that a youth reaches the age of 25, thus no longer meeting the definition of a 'youth with a disability', whichever occurs first. In all other situations, funding for Extended Services shall come from sources other than DVR.

Once an individual is employed, a Supported Employment Long-Term Support Agreement must be completed between DVR and the Extended Service provider. The Long-Term Support Agreement must include the name of the Extended Service provider, the name of the individual, the funding source, access to financial reports, and must be signed by the Extended Service provider and the VR Counselor. The provider can utilize DVR's Supported Employment Long-Term Support Agreement or provide the required information in another format.

Supported Employment (SE) cases are closed as successfully employed when the individual:

- Is working in their chosen employment goal
- Has met or is reasonably expected to meet their goal for hours of employment as stated in the criteria for evaluate progress section of the IPE
- Is earning minimum wage or above in an integrated setting
- Has achieved job stability
- Has the necessary supports in place
- Is receiving Extended Services through a source other than ADVR (unless the individual is a youth with a most significant disability receiving Extended Services from ADVR, in which case, the case will remain open until the youth: transitions to another funding source; or receives four years of Extended Services; or turns 25).

#### VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL) CERTIFICATIONS

1. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE,) IS AUTHORIZED TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 (REHABILITATION ACT), AS AMENDED BY WIOA[14], AND ITS SUPPLEMENT UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT[15];

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE

Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

2. AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES, THE (ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY)[16] AGREES TO OPERATE AND ADMINISTER THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[17], THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[18], POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER SECTION 111 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT ARE USED SOLELY FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY

Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development

3. AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AGREES TO OPERATE AND ADMINISTER THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT



SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[19] , THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[20] , POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER TITLE VI ARE USED SOLELY FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

4. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND/OR THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT HAS THE AUTHORITY UNDER STATE LAW TO PERFORM THE FUNCTIONS OF THE STATE REGARDING THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT;

5. THE STATE LEGALLY MAY CARRY OUT EACH PROVISION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.

6. ALL PROVISIONS OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT ARE CONSISTENT WITH STATE LAW.

7. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY UNDER STATE LAW TO RECEIVE, HOLD, AND DISBURSE FEDERAL FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT;

ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

Duane Mayes, Director

8. THE (ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND THE SUPPLEMENT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

Director, Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

9. THE AGENCY THAT SUBMITS THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT HAS ADOPTED OR OTHERWISE FORMALLY APPROVED THE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.

#### FOOTNOTES

#### CERTIFICATION SIGNATURE

Signatory information	Enter Signatory information in this column
Name of Signatory	Duane Mayes
Title of Signatory	Director, Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Date Signed	March 7, 2022

#### ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include	Include
1. Public Comment on Policies and Procedures: The designated State agency assures it will comply	

The State Plan must include	Include
with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.	
2. Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement: The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a unified plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.	
3. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to: Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan:	
3.a. The establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.b. The establishment of either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable (A or B must be selected):	
3.b.(A) "is an independent State commission" (Yes/No)	No
3.b.(B) "has established a State Rehabilitation Council" (Yes/No)	Yes
3.c. Consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.d. The financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3)	

The State Plan must include	Include
3.e. The local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds (Yes/No)	No
3.f. The shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs (Yes/No)	No
3.g. Statewide and waivers of statewide requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act. Is the designated State agency requesting or maintaining a waiver of statewide for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan? (Yes/No) See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan	No
3.h. The descriptions for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.i. All required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.j. The requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.k. The compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.l. The reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities	
3.m. The submission of reports as required by	

The State Plan must include	Include
section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4. Administration of the Provision of VR Services: The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:	
4.a. Comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.b. Impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.c. Provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services in accordance with section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act? (Yes/No)	Yes
4.d. Determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.e. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.f. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.g. Provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.h. Comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by section 101(a)(14) of the Rehabilitation Act	

The State Plan must include	Include
4.i. Meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs	
4.j. With respect to students with disabilities, the State,	
4.j.i. Has developed and will implement,	
4.j.i.I. Strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and	
4.j.i.II. Strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and	
4.j.ii. Has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(25))	
5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement:	
5.a. The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act	
5.b. The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act	
5.c. The designated state unit will coordinate activities with any other State agency that is functioning as an employment network under the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency program under Section 1148 of the Social Security Act	
6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program:	
6.a. The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or	

The State Plan must include	Include
indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(G) and (H) of the Rehabilitation Act	
6.b. The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act	
7. Provision of Supported Employment Services:	Yes
7.a. The Designated State Agency Assures That it Will Provide Supported Employment Services as Defined in Section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act	
7.b. The designated State agency assures that:	
7.b.i. The comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act	
7.b.ii. An individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act	

#### VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2023 Expected Level	PY 2023 Negotiated Level
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Performance Indicators	PY 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2023 Expected Level	PY 2023 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	51.7%	52.6%	52.7%	54.1%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	47.0%	50.0%	48.0%	52.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$4,570	\$4,635	\$4,600	\$4,716
Credential Attainment Rate	41.5%	42.0%	41.5%	42.5%
Measurable Skill Gains	23.0%	61.4%	24.0%	61.8%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

1

*“Effectiveness in Serving Employers” is still being developed and this data will not be entered in the 2022 State Plan modifications.*

## VII. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS

### SENIOR COMMUNITY SERVICE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (SCSEP)

#### A. ECONOMIC PROJECTIONS AND IMPACT

1. DISCUSS LONG-TERM PROJECTIONS FOR JOBS IN INDUSTRIES AND OCCUPATIONS IN THE STATE THAT MAY PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER WORKERS. (20 CFR 641.302(D)) (MAY ALTERNATIVELY BE DISCUSSED IN THE ECONOMIC ANALYSIS SECTION OF STRATEGIC PLAN.)

See full discussion in the economic analysis section of this Alaska WIOA strategic plan.

The Older Americans Act, Title V maintains the dual purposes of promoting community service and work-based training activities for unemployed low-income persons ages 55 and older with poor employment prospects. In Alaska, automation, artificial intelligence, global competition, and an evolving workplace are all factors changing the way of work for seniors, and now COVID-19, have had a dramatic impact on all aspects of SCSEP.

In an effort to expand and develop employment opportunities, the department’s senior management marketing team is working on outreach, and local partners are working together to develop training to enhance employment opportunities for seniors. Based on the ongoing pandemic, these meetings have focused on what are we will do to help bring the programs back to normal or what the new normal operation will look like. The program continues to assist eligible seniors in developing skills and experiences to facilitate their transition back to unsubsidized employment during the pandemic. It is noted that many participants do not have access to a computer, iPhone, Internet, or Wi-Fi due to the cost of these services, and trying to find resource centers open to these seniors is very hard.

2. DISCUSS HOW THE LONG-TERM JOB PROJECTIONS DISCUSSED IN THE ECONOMIC ANALYSIS SECTION OF STRATEGIC PLAN RELATE TO THE TYPES OF UNSUBSIDIZED JOBS FOR WHICH SCSEP PARTICIPANTS WILL BE TRAINED AND THE TYPES OF SKILL TRAINING TO BE PROVIDED. (20 CFR 641.302(D))

Alaska continues to develop the State's resources and maximize its human capital. This is accomplished with the ongoing collaborative engagement of AWIB, ACoA, local industries, state universities, vocational educational centers, organized labor, economic development representatives, educators, tribal entities, and community and faith-based organizations, as well as regional and local officials. Alaska employers continue to hire older workers with a firm foundation of both basic employability skills and specific technical knowledge for occupations at all levels of education and training. Employment outcome for SCSEP participants is in health care, retail, leisure and hospitality, transportation, warehousing, social assistance, food services, administrative, and support services.

SCSEP workforce development activities include skill assessments, development of Individual Employment Plans, employment counseling, civic engagement planning, and workforce preparation. SCSEP skills training for local employment is gained by the participant providing community service and earning a minimum wage. Host site training combines workplace training with related skill building, job readiness, adult education, or literacy activities. The program works with the University of Alaska and Alaska Adult Education as training partners to assist participants in obtaining credentials.

SCSEP is assisting seniors to gain skills in communication, collaborative problem solving, critical thinking, and software competency. Alaska is aware of the need to improve the training and preparation that individuals receive for jobs that are in demand. Current strategies in training include identifying competencies that workers must have to do their jobs effectively, helping participants build these specific skills, and assessing their work to ensure that they have the capacity to perform the duties or tasks. Alaska's long-term strategy is to ensure that job opportunities are available to older workers and that the program continues to engage workforce development partners, the business community, and senior service partners to provide successful employment outcomes for seniors and Alaskan businesses alike.

3. DISCUSS CURRENT AND PROJECTED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE STATE (SUCH AS BY PROVIDING INFORMATION AVAILABLE UNDER §15 OF THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT (29 U.S.C. 491-2) BY OCCUPATION), AND THE TYPES OF SKILLS POSSESSED BY ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS. (20 CFR 641.325(C))

Current and projected employment opportunities are found in health care, community and social services, personal care and service, sales, production occupations/industries, food preparation and serving, education, transportation, and material moving occupations (logistics). Other employment opportunities include management, professional, and information occupations. The types of skills that need to be developed and possessed by work-ready SCSEP individuals are verbal communication skills, teamwork skills, analytical skills, computer skills, initiative, and a strong work ethic. For the full discussion regarding our annual employment forecast in Alaska, Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Southeast see <https://labor.alaska.gov/trends/jan22.pdf>.

B. SERVICE DELIVERY AND COORDINATION

1. A DESCRIPTION OF ACTIONS TO COORDINATE SCSEP WITH OTHER PROGRAMS. THIS MAY ALTERNATIVELY BE DISCUSSED IN THE STATE STRATEGIES SECTION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN, BUT REGARDLESS OF PLACEMENT IN DOCUMENT, MUST INCLUDE:

A. PLANNED ACTIONS TO COORDINATE ACTIVITIES OF SCSEP GRANTEEES WITH WIOA TITLE I PROGRAMS, INCLUDING PLANS FOR USING THE WIOA ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM AND ITS PARTNERS TO SERVE INDIVIDUALS AGED 55 AND OLDER. (20 CFR 641.302(G), 641.325(E))



Alaska fosters coordination by working directly with the various WIOA subrecipients operating within the state and facilitates the efforts of stakeholders to work collaboratively through a participatory process to accomplish SCSEP's goals. The planned actions are to work directly within the WIOA one-stop delivery system to provide referrals both to older individuals who are not eligible for SCSEP and to those who are eligible but need the career services that SCSEP is unable to provide.

SCSEP staff work directly within the Alaska Job Center Network with mandated partners to co-enroll participants in state training and employment programs. This ensures that SCSEP is an integrated, effective, job-driven workforce program. DOLWD continues to solidify its commitments to public/private partnerships to refine strategies and increase the responsiveness of SCSEP by providing oversight and technical assistance activities to improve program performance.

Alaska SCSEP has been an active partner within the One-Stop delivery system for the past 17 years and works to improve coordination among SCSEP, WIOA, and its local partners at regional meetings. Weekly, SCSEP meets with WIOA program coordinators to ensure advancement of employment services and discuss enhancement between each other's services.

SCSEP local staff coordinates with its partners to ensure that participants understand that there are many services available from WIOA programs. WIOA staff has developed an integrated system of case management plans that are collocated inside AlaskaJobs to address the requirement of grant funds and needs of participants and employers. All partners accept each other's paperwork and case notes to assist the participant. SCSEP case managers work with participants and employment service partners to develop individual training plans, and this contributes to the overall enrichment of communities across Alaska.

As part of the Older Americans Act, SCSEP serves those who are most in need, those with limited English proficiency, low literacy, or disabilities, and those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. SCSEP contributes to the increase of older job seekers finding and retaining good jobs. As a required partner, SCSEP contributes and supports WIOA seamless customer-focused service delivery model.

#### B. PLANNED ACTIONS TO COORDINATE ACTIVITIES OF SCSEP GRANTEEES WITH THE ACTIVITIES BEING CARRIED OUT IN THE STATE UNDER THE OTHER TITLES OF THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT (OAA). (20 CFR 641.302(H))

SCSEP continues to have a strong working relationship between the Older Americans Act and its OAA subrecipients regarding the long-term projections for employment opportunities for older workers, as Alaska's senior population continues to grow along with the needs of employers for older workers in health care and social services. Both the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) and the Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) continuous improvement strategies assist us with workforce needs through planning, advocacy, public awareness efforts, and ongoing collaboration with other organizations focused on the well-being of older Alaskans, especially now due to the effects of the COVID-19 public health emergency.

SCSEP service delivery is integrated into the state's workforce investment system and the senior service system. Skilled SCSEP staff provide quality services to older workers, and employers have reported high satisfaction levels with participants who have entered unsubsidized employment with them. Alaska's strategy is to continue to reach out to workforce development partners, the business community, and the senior service partners to ensure successful outcomes for older workers and Alaskan businesses.

Joint actions that coordinate activities of SCSEP subrecipients include following labor directives and OAA guidance in developing the workforce needs. SCSEP is aligned with the state's commitment to economic development, and its workforce development programs rely on the broad strategic policy decisions of the AWIB and ACoA to clarify the relationship between

programs and particular economic development efforts. The State is also working on updating its four-year Plan on Senior Services under the Older Americans Act. Currently, the Plan has been approved for the period from October 1, 2019, through September 30, 2023. SCSEP is an active partner in its updates and development, see [http://dhss.alaska.gov/acoa/Documents/ACoA\\_StatePlan\\_FY2020-FY2023.pdf](http://dhss.alaska.gov/acoa/Documents/ACoA_StatePlan_FY2020-FY2023.pdf).

The specific goals of Alaska's Older Americans Act Senior Service plan include: promote healthy aging and provide access to comprehensive and integrated health care; ensure seniors are financially secure; protect vulnerable seniors from abuse, neglect, self-neglect, and exploitation; ensure seniors have access to quality, affordable, accessible, safe, and appropriate housing, including senior housing, across the continuum of care; and provide seniors with the highest quality of life. This OAA plan was developed alongside several existing and collaborating planning efforts: Call to Action to Address Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias; Alaska Core Competencies for Direct Care Workers in Health and Human Services; State Plan for Independent Living; Comprehensive Integrated Mental Health Program Plan; Alaska Health Workforce Coalition Action Agenda; and Alaska Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Plan.

SCSEP's service delivery plan and coordination include working directly with other OAA partner agencies in providing services to those seniors most in need or by giving seniors a referral to OAA Titles III (Supportive Services, Nutrition, Disease Prevention/Health Promotion and Caregiver Programs), VI (Native American Programs and Elder Services), and VII (Elder Rights Programs). While multiple state agencies provide services to Alaska seniors, the Department of Health & Social Services (DHSS) is the State of Alaska's designated state unit on aging. The program works directly with the ACoA to plan and coordinate services with all other OAA programs and staff to better support not only employment, but also health, wellness, and independence for seniors. Partners will continue to work together on our state plan goals and needs assessment.

For example, each quarter at ACoA meetings, the SCSEP coordinator meets with other State directors and other local coordinators to ensure that SCSEP activities are leveraging partnerships with: Aging and Disability Resource Centers, Senior Home and Community Based programs, Nutrition, Transportation, Support Services, Adult Day Service, National Family Caregiver Support programs, the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorder Education and Support programs, Senior Residential Services, Medicare Information services, Legal Assistance, Alaska Legal Services, Consumer Choice, Medicaid Waiver programs, Nursing Facility Transition programs, Health and Disease Prevention programs, Adult Protective Services, AARP, etc. Referrals are made to all appropriate services to assist the participants as needed. These open public meetings are held statewide in different locations and via audioconference to ensure ongoing collaboration and communication with key organizations.

**C. PLANNED ACTIONS TO COORDINATE SCSEP WITH OTHER PRIVATE AND PUBLIC ENTITIES AND PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE SERVICES TO OLDER AMERICANS, SUCH AS COMMUNITY AND FAITH- BASED ORGANIZATIONS, TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS, AND PROGRAMS FOR THOSE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS OR DISABILITIES. (20 CFR 641.302(I))**

Planned actions of staff is ongoing, including posting of flyers within host agencies and local community sites to advertise for new participants in their areas. Staff encourages host sites to share this information with their community members and the families they serve. Staff also continue to recruit participants from area nonprofits via local listserv for nonprofit community outreach. Local coordination with partners, such as the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, TANF, Alaska Native entities, area correctional facility release programs, faith-based organizations, and regional training centers, happen every day to promote cross-referrals to services that may address barriers to employment and facilitate attachment to employment or further training.

Currently, SCSEP coordinates with its open host sites to use its resources to ensure successful community service for participants who need skill building activities. SCSEP is also an enormous value for seniors experiencing isolation and loneliness. The program works statewide with food banks, Alaska Disability and Resource Centers, housing and transportation agencies, public assistance, faith-based organizations, and many non-profits to reach those most in need and to provide wrap-around services.

#### D. PLANNED ACTIONS TO COORDINATE SCSEP WITH OTHER LABOR MARKET AND JOB TRAINING INITIATIVES. (20 CFR 641.302(J))

SCSEP staff continues to coordinate with other labor programs, initiatives, and entities in an ongoing effort to train Alaska's participants. These ongoing partnerships have yielded important training resources for older adults who wish to enter or re-enter the workforce. Actions to coordinate initiatives begin with planning and delivery of services at the Veterans Job Fair or Disability Job Fair, or by working directly with the Business Employment Services Team for provisional hires. The program requires that all participants attend job fairs in their communities, so they are aware of local employment opportunities or job training initiatives and skills needed to obtain local positions. SCSEP participants are also encouraged to prepare themselves in the areas of math, reading, writing, communication, and computer skills to become work ready. If more than self help is needed, Alaska Adult Education or the University of Alaska aids in developing these skills based on the individual's skill level and learning capacity. Additional online learning is available within the AlaskaJobs database. Other training available includes use of job search tools, resume writing, interviewing, and, job placement through referral and application or job development.

The state provides a wide range of programs and services to seniors, spanning multiple divisions and other private and public entities. Funds from the Older Americans Act (OAA) are leveraged with WIOA, other federal programs, and resources from the Alaska State Training and Employment Program (STEP), assuring coordination and avoiding duplication of services or activities. The programs provide local training in priority industry sectors by placing participants in community work-based training sites at non-profits, faith-based organizations, transportation and public facilities, governmental offices, senior centers, schools, and food banks.

#### E. ACTIONS TO ENSURE THAT SCSEP IS AN ACTIVE PARTNER IN THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM AND THE STEPS THE STATE WILL TAKE TO ENCOURAGE AND IMPROVE COORDINATION WITH THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM. (20 CFR 641.335)

SCSEP is managed by DOLWD's Division of Employment and Training Services (DETS), which administers WIOA Title I, II, and III to deliver services in 14 AJCs. SCSEP has been fully integrated into the AJCs for more than 17 years, and the close relationship between its core and required partners is seamless. These partnerships ensure access to other employment services both to individuals and communities throughout the state. SCSEP is collocated within each AJC, and it is beneficial, as referrals happen between all programs as older workers often need additional assistance with resume and interview workshops, mock interviews, assessments, testing for credentials, and other community resources for successful job placement.

The State recognizes the need for reliable older workers in the workforce and ensures that SCSEP is an active partner in the one-stop delivery system. Key organizations utilize Alaska Job Centers for meeting areas, training needs, employment searches, individual employment plan development, and general communication at partner meetings. Positive coordination continues within the One-Stop delivery system with core and required agencies delivering training and employment services to seniors.

The referral process among the programs is implemented on an individualized basis depending on the specific needs of the person. All DOLWD staff are trained and expected to be

knowledgeable in the requirements and eligibility of other one stop programs to ensure an appropriate program referral. Appropriate referrals are necessary to leverage resources and maximize service delivery to individuals while ensuring non-duplication of services. For example, AJC staff who provide initial intake and career services have been trained to appropriately identify and refer individuals to disability services such as the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation, and other supporting entities. Cross training of each other's programs has provided a high level of thoughtfulness to the reason for each referral, increasing the success for the participant when obtaining needed services.

#### F. EFFORTS TO WORK WITH LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICES IN RURAL LOCATIONS.

SCSEP is aligned with the state's commitment to local economic development, and its workforce development programs rely on the broad strategic policy decisions of the AWIB and Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA). Partners collaborate to develop policies, procedures, and best practices to facilitate the integration of services to ensure job seekers' needs are being met and referrals to other resources are successful. Local SCSEP staff continuously seek new host agencies and potential employers in their communities as resources for SCSEP participants. They maintain strong relationships with local employers to enhance collaboration with workforce partners and promote employment opportunities for older workers.

There are ongoing statewide marketing efforts in rural areas to which SCSEP can assign participants to local nonprofit host sites to help them provide needed services within the community. Through these new assignments, participants are engaged in community service activities and receive work experience and job skills training that should lead to unsubsidized employment. Participants gain valuable skills, increase their confidence to re-enter the workforce, and earn income while assisting local organizations to provide civic engagement within the community.

Given the current pandemic and the possibility of continued periodic disruption to the traditional SCSEP service-delivery model, staff and host sites have modified some community service models to include remote or telework arrangements while ensuring development of needed skills, training aligned to participants' Individual Employment Plans, and access to any hardware and connectivity necessary for the work assigned. The program notes that not all community service assignments can be modified due to the nature of the training required.

Alaska's marketing efforts to reach out to and engage employers in the development and promotion of opportunities to participants is accomplished by working with them directly or through AJC business connection services. Program staff present at local chambers of commerce, senior centers, partner meetings, and other local organizations that serve seniors. Local organizations are very important to SCSEP and provide many employment opportunities in health care, tourism, and other growing employment sectors.

#### 2. THE STATE'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY FOR ENGAGING EMPLOYERS TO DEVELOP AND PROMOTE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE PLACEMENT OF SCSEP PARTICIPANTS IN UNSUBSIDIZED EMPLOYMENT. (20 CFR 641.302(E)) (MAY ALTERNATIVELY BE DISCUSSED IN THE STATE STRATEGIES SECTION OF STRATEGIC PLAN.)

Alaska long-term strategy for engaging employers to develop and promote opportunities for the placement of SCSEP participants in unsubsidized employment is to foster collaboration among job centers, education institutions, labor, and non-profits, and to work with employers to determine local or regional hiring needs that inform responsive training programs that lead to employment. Alaska's strategy for engaging employers in the development and promotion of opportunities for seniors is to work directly with them and train local participants to be hired.

The program remains focused on service delivery that is integrated into the state's workforce investment system and senior service system. Skilled AJC and SCSEP staff provide quality

services to older workers. This strategy of working directly with employers to increase the hiring of seniors has been a win-win for both participants and employers. Employers have reported high satisfaction levels with SCSEP participants who have entered unsubsidized employment with them. These new employees bring great work habits, problem solving skills, the ability to work with others, and adaptability to change with business needs. Without SCSEP services, many of our eligible seniors would not have achieved employment. According to employers, once trained, these older workers are better educated and more computer savvy. They also bring vast experience, high work ethics, low turnover rates, and knowledge.

### 3. THE STATE'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY FOR SERVING MINORITY OLDER INDIVIDUALS UNDER SCSEP. (20 CFR 641.302 (C))

The State of Alaska workforce, like its population, is culturally and racially diverse. Our population growth has brought a shift in our demographics resulting in the growth of minority populations. This knowledge of the State's workforce gives us an awareness of how and where to continue to change or to increase participation of minority individuals. A barrier to receiving program services is their modest incomes that place them just above the SCSEP income eligibility limit, as this program is not able to enroll them for assistance regardless of their need. Alaska strives to provide services to the greatest possible number of participants, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, political affiliation, belief, marital status, changes in marital status, pregnancy, past incarceration, or parenthood under a state administered program.

SCSEP's long-term strategy is to ensure that Alaska's job opportunities are available to older workers and that the program continues to engage workforce development partners, the business community, and senior service partners to provide successful outcomes for seniors and Alaskan businesses alike. SCSEP fosters individual economic self-sufficiency and promotes useful part-time opportunities in community service assignments.

Another strategy is to focus outreach efforts on community groups that have frequent contact with the older adults in the target populations. Developing and enhancing these relationships has been challenging with COVID-19, but in some communities, they have allowed the program to restart participants to train with them. Further strategy discussions about telework or virtual or remote community service assignment and to bring further awareness of SCSEP civic engagement opportunities for minorities are ongoing.

All partners are working together and using a referral process with the partners of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, State Training Employment Program, Public Assistance, Public Housing, Corrections, and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. These local partners usually work with the person first to see if they can place them in open employment positions based on their job skills. SCSEP continues to operate the program through AJCs, subrecipients, and local staff to extend employment services to minority seniors.

Below are Alaska race population estimates of 2020 and the percent of enrollment based on race.

Alaska Race	2020 Populations over 55 years old	2020 Percent of Enrollment	PY 20 Served
White (non-Hispanic)	75.22%	54.00%	67
Black/African American	2.67%	13.00%	16
American Indian/Alaska Native	12.00%	21.00%	26
Asian	6.45%	3.00%	4

Alaska Race	2020 Populations over 55 years old	2020 Percent of Enrollment	PY 20 Served
Hispanic	3.44%	1.00%	1
Pacific Islander	0.74%	1.00%	1
Two or More Races	2.92%	5.00%	6

Below is a breakdown of Alaskan seniors by age in July 2020.

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development Research and Analysis Section

Age	Total	Male	Female
55-59	48,055	24,755	23,300
60-64	46,854	23,882	22,972
65-69	38,405	19,689	18,716
70-74	26,079	13,355	12,724
75-79	15,430	7,667	7,763
80-84	8,399	3,951	4,448
85-89	4,442	1,810	2,632
90+	2,490	877	1,613
Total	190,154	95,986	94,168

This is the fourth year in a row with a decline in total state population, which is now about 728,903, down from 732,734 in 2018. Yet seniors continue to increase in Alaska; in 2018, there were about 186,349 seniors 55 and over compared to 190,154 in 2020, an increase of 3,805 .

**4. A LIST OF COMMUNITY SERVICES THAT ARE NEEDED AND THE PLACES WHERE THESE SERVICES ARE MOST NEEDED. SPECIFICALLY, THE PLAN MUST ADDRESS THE NEEDS AND LOCATION OF THOSE INDIVIDUALS MOST IN NEED OF COMMUNITY SERVICES AND THE GROUPS WORKING TO MEET THEIR NEEDS. (20 CFR 641.330)**

The types of seniors who are most in need of the SCSEP are widowed and divorced persons, minorities, high-school dropouts, Veterans, those who are not eligible for Social Security benefits or with a limited work history, formerly incarcerated individuals, or those on a fixed low income. SCSEP operates where there is the greatest need relative to participants, host agencies, and employers. The issue remains that the services most in need are a laptop, iPhone that can be used as an Internet hotspot, and FaceTime/TEAMS/Zoom access that will provide interaction with the participant's SCSEP supervisor due to the ongoing changes in the workforce due to COVID-19.

SCSEP-funded community services remain available statewide via the AJCs and subrecipients but without the basic tools of a computer, Internet, and a supervisor, the program fails. These older workers need to find information and support to help them adapt to changing work arrangements and acquire new technology and digital literacy skills. Other community services needed are mental health and financial literacy. Everyone enrolled needs assistance in gaining employment.

The areas with the greatest need for SCSEP-funded services are Anchorage, Matanuska-Susitna, Kenai Peninsula, Fairbanks, Bethel, and Juneau, as so many seniors relocate to these regions to be near medical care. In addition, these older individuals may not have access to public transportation. Private transportation issues are compounded by fuel costs, vehicle maintenance costs, and the time and/or distance involved in traveling between a participant's home and the training site. COVID-19 has added another factor in public transportation, as it has been limited for social distancing. SCSEP staff must consider these additional factors when a participant is assigned to a host agency.

Regional economic challenges facing older Alaskans include income insecurity, the need for more reliable access to health care and long-term care supports, a shortage of sufficient senior services and health care services, and the need for emergency preparedness for a wide range of potential disasters. The supportive services needed for SCSEP participants are employment assistance, transportation, congregate meals, information referrals, housing, health care, utility bill assistance, training in use of emerging technologies, food assistance, and eyeglasses. The groups working with SCSEP on meeting senior needs are the WIOA partners, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Senior and Disabilities Services, Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education, Alaska Mental Health Trust, faith-based organizations, food banks, senior centers, vocational training centers, and the University of Alaska.

**5. THE STATE'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY TO IMPROVE SCSEP SERVICES, INCLUDING PLANNED LONG-TERM CHANGES TO THE DESIGN OF THE PROGRAM WITHIN THE STATE, AND PLANNED CHANGES IN THE USE OF SCSEP GRANTEES AND PROGRAM OPERATORS TO BETTER ACHIEVE THE GOALS OF THE PROGRAM. THIS MAY INCLUDE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE DEPARTMENT AS APPROPRIATE. (20 CFR 641.302(K))**

The long-term strategies to improve program goals and services give the program an opportunity to work directly with its partners in education, industry, workforce development, economic development, and the public. SCSEP strategies include identifying competencies that workers must have to do their jobs effectively, helping workers build specific skills, and assessing their work to ensure that they have the capacity to perform duties or tasks competently. Many of the participants' former work skills are transferable; however, most participants need computer training to be able to apply for work and transition into today's workforce. The long-term strategy to improve SCSEP services is to link course work and training to ensure that participants understand what is expected in the workplace and the type of work demands that are required of the body.

The WIOA Combined Plan for Alaska long-term strategy to improve SCSEP services emphasizes sector partnerships, career pathways, cross-program data and measurement, and job-driven investments with workforce partners. Alaska's plan stresses the importance of education, training, credentials, and skill attainment. Its joint plan addresses economic self-sufficiency of workers by aligning workforce development with education and economic development.

Another long-term strategy to improve SCSEP services is to include discussion with participants on financial and work incentives, to provide information on Social Security 1619b Medicaid While Working, and to explore specialized work incentives through programs including Ticket to Work, Impairment-Related Work Expenses, Blind Work Expenses, and Plan to Achieve Self-Support, and to provide referrals to DVR or Alaska Aging and Disability Resource Centers for those in need of these services.

**6. THE STATE'S STRATEGY FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN THE LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE FOR SCSEP PARTICIPANTS' ENTRY INTO UNSUBSIDIZED EMPLOYMENT, AND TO ACHIEVE, AT A MINIMUM, THE LEVELS SPECIFIED IN OAA SECTION 513(A)(2)(E)(II). (20 CFR 641.302(F))**

The State's strategy for continuous improvement includes collaboration and integration into the state's larger workforce development system and other program data to drive decisions on services offered and industries targeted. Incorporating these elements into program planning and operations prepares SCSEP participants for self-sustaining employment and economic stability after program exit. Other strategies include strengthening initial assessments of participant skills, knowledge, interests, aptitudes, and qualities, and defining career objectives that are relevant for the participant's interests and abilities and local business needs. These businesses help the projects remain informed of changes in the local workforce openings, which allows staff to quickly notify participants of potential employment.

### C. LOCATION AND POPULATION SERVED, INCLUDING EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION

#### 1. A DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCALITIES AND POPULATIONS FOR WHICH PROJECTS OF THE TYPE AUTHORIZED BY TITLE V ARE MOST NEEDED. (20 CFR 641.325 (D))

Alaska has lost host sites and employment opportunities due to COVID-19. The census regions most in need of Title V services are Anchorage, Fairbanks, Matanuska-Susitna, Kenai Peninsula, Bethel, and Juneau. Training is available statewide based on an open host site and a willing supervisor to train the participant. The community service training projects most needed are in government, senior centers, transportation, education, health services, retail trade, leisure and hospitality.

#### 2. LIST THE CITIES AND COUNTIES WHERE THE PROJECT WILL BE CONDUCTED. INCLUDE THE NUMBER OF SCSEP AUTHORIZED POSITIONS AND INDICATE WHERE THE POSITIONS CHANGED FROM THE PRIOR YEAR.

The State of Alaska uses the federal equitable distribution as the basis for authorized positions.

FIPS	Alaska Census/Borough	2021	2019	Change
2013	Aleutians	1	0	1
2016	Aleutians	2	2	0
2020	Anchorage	53	56	-3
2050	Bethel	7	6	1
2060	Bristol	0	0	0
2063	Chugach	2	0	1
2066	Copper River	1	0	1
2068	Denali	2	0	2
2070	Dillingham	2	2	0
2090	Fairbanks North Star	15	16	-1
2100	Haines	1	0	1
2105	Hoonah-Angoon	1	2	-1
2110	Juneau	6	5	1
2122	Kenai	22	21	1
2130	Ketchikan	4	5	-1



FIPS	Alaska Census/Borough	2021	2019	Change
2150	Kodiak	3	3	0
2158	Kusilvak	4	3	1
2164	Lake and Peninsula	1	0	1
2170	Matanuska-Susitna	31	25	6
2180	Nome	3	5	-2
2185	North	2	2	0
2188	Northwest	3	3	0
2195	Petersburg	1	2	-1
2198	Prince of Wales-Hyder	3	3	0
2220	Sitka	2	2	0
2230	Skagway	0	0	0
2240	Southeast	2	3	-1
2261	Valdez-Cordova (see Chugach/Copper River)	0	3	-3
2275	Wrangell	0	2	-2
2282	Yakutat	0	0	0
2290	Yukon-Koyukuk	3	4	-1
	<b>Total Slots</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>2</b>

No enrollee will be displaced in his/her position due to efforts to resolve equitable distribution problems, as the state has the flexibility to assist participants no matter where they live. No enrollee will be terminated simply because of the equitable distribution requirement.

### 3. DESCRIBE CURRENT SLOT IMBALANCES AND PROPOSED STEPS TO CORRECT INEQUITIES TO ACHIEVE EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION.

The state continues to reach out to all regions and is open for enrollment. Alaska has the fastest growing senior population rate in the U.S. and is expected to grow very rapidly in the next 8 years due to the size of the baby boomer population as well as historical trends in longevity. SCSEP's long-term strategy remains the same, to continue to help all those who qualify for services. SCSEP enrollment is affected by seasonal employment and the fact that many Alaskan seniors are work-ready or over income limits.

The program staff continues to reach out to find eligible participants to serve in all regions. Many of us will remember 2020-2021 as one of the most economically devastating and emotionally draining years ever. Record unemployment and business closures, Zoom meetings, reduced gatherings, and ongoing concerns over health and safety have challenged every aspect of our daily lives. The program is working closely with its core partners to promote SCSEP and to increase enrollment as host sites reopen and participants feel safe to return to training and employment.

Currently, Alaska has developed recruitment brochures and posters. Staff went around towns with fliers and brochures and spoke to host site supervisors and local contacts to assist in

recruitment efforts. This generated discussion in communities that SCSEP is ready to assist older Americans in community service assignments and how the program can assist in reopening their nonprofits.

4. THE STATE'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY FOR ACHIEVING AN EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF SCSEP POSITIONS WITHIN THE STATE THAT:

A. MOVES POSITIONS FROM OVER-SERVED TO UNDERSERVED LOCATIONS WITHIN THE STATE IN COMPLIANCE WITH 20 CFR 641.365.

SCSEP services are available in all regions. The program is fully integrated into all AJCs with the assistance of subrecipients and local host sites. The program continues to advertise at its AJC team meetings, informing community partners what this program can do for older Alaskans and for employers. This proactive approach empowers seniors to connect with AJCs or SCSEP. DOLWD is continuing its campaign to "Strengthen Alaska Workforce by Employing the Older Worker" and to raise awareness of the valuable resources older workers provide. This campaign fosters innovative strategies to assist seniors to obtain employable skills and find suitable work in today's local job market.

B. EQUITABLY SERVES RURAL AND URBAN AREAS.

Alaska's SCSEP continues to be available to all eligible participants statewide. The state's long-term strategies to equitably serve both rural and urban areas are: 1) to award subrecipients who are capable project operators of the state; 2) to operate the program with staff in AJCs; and 3) to continue to make program services available to both urban and rural areas of the state. It is noted that the pandemic is materially impairing the ability of Alaska SCSEP to meet its equitable distribution of service objective. The challenge is finding community service training opportunities for participants wishing to learn office skills or needing to improve computer skills amid the changes in office staffing and capacity, as many government and nonprofit organization staff are working remotely; finding open host sites to assist those in need is becoming the biggest challenge.

C. SERVES INDIVIDUALS AFFORDED PRIORITY FOR SERVICE UNDER 20 CFR 641.520. (20 CFR 641.302(A), 641.365, 641.520)

The state understands that pursuant to regulations prescribed by the Labor Secretary, an eligible individual shall have priority for the community service assignment and other authorized activities provided under the OAA Amendments of 2006, Title V - SCSEP if the individual is 65 years of age or older or:

(A) has a disability;

(B) has limited English proficiency or low literacy skills;

(C) resides in a rural area;

(D) is a veteran;

(E) has low employment prospects;

(F) has failed to find employment after using services provided under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act; or

(G) is homeless or at risk for homelessness; or

(H) has been incarcerated within the last five years or under supervision following the release from prison or jail within the last five years.

5. THE RATIO OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS IN EACH SERVICE AREA TO THE TOTAL ELIGIBLE POPULATION IN THE STATE. (20 CFR 641.325(A))

Alaska Census Region	Total	Male	Female	Percent
<b>Seniors 55 and over</b>	<b>190,154</b>	<b>95,986</b>	<b>94,168</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
Aleutians East Borough	860	536	324	0.45%
Aleutians West Census Area	1,383	946	437	0.73%
Anchorage Municipality	72,948	35,355	37,593	38.36%
Bethel Census Area	3,299	1,737	1,562	1.73%
Bristol Bay Borough	309	172	137	0.16%
Denali Borough	581	348	233	0.31%
Dillingham Census Area	1,130	603	527	0.59%
Fairbanks North Star Borough	23,715	12,010	11,705	12.47%
Haines Borough	1,053	521	532	0.55%
Hoonah-Angoon Census Area	879	485	394	0.46%
Juneau City and Borough	9,138	4,539	4,599	4.81%
Kenai Peninsula Borough	20,372	10,446	9,926	10.71%
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	4,312	2,173	2,139	2.27%
Kodiak Island Borough	3,306	1,696	1,610	1.74%
Kusilvak Census Area	1,250	648	602	0.66%
Lake and Peninsula Borough	394	222	172	0.21%
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	28,060	14,243	13,817	14.76%
Nome Census Area	1,838	954	884	0.97%
North Slope Borough	1,933	1,241	692	1.02%
Northwest Arctic Borough	1,396	756	640	0.73%
Petersburg Borough	1,132	580	552	0.60%

Alaska Census Region	Total	Male	Female	Percent
Prince of Wales-Hyder Census	2,058	1,158	900	1.08%
Sitka City and Borough	2,715	1,301	1,414	1.43%
Skagway Borough, Municipality	309	152	157	0.16%
Southeast Fairbanks Census	2,079	1,151	928	1.09%
Valdez-Cordova Census	961	543	418	0.51%
Wrangell City and Borough	991	521	470	0.52%
Yakutat City and Borough	185	100	85	0.10%
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	1,568	849	719	0.82%

6. THE RELATIVE DISTRIBUTION OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO:

A. RESIDE IN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS WITHIN THE STATE

- 52% of the enrolled participants reside in an urban area and 48% of the enrolled participants reside in a rural area

B. HAVE THE GREATEST ECONOMIC NEED

- 84% of the enrolled participants are at or below the poverty level
- 77% of the enrolled participants are receiving public assistance
- 35% of the enrolled participants are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- 22% of the enrolled participants are veterans or eligible spouse of a veteran

C. ARE MINORITIES

- 46% of the enrolled participants are minorities

D. ARE LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT

- 6% of the enrolled participants have low literacy skills
- 2% of the enrolled participants have limited English proficiency

E. HAVE THE GREATEST SOCIAL NEED. (20 CFR 641.325(B))

- 90% have severely limited employment prospects in areas of persistent unemployment
- 61% of the enrolled participants have low employment prospects
- 28% of the enrolled participants have disabilities

- 15% of the enrolled participants are individuals age 75 and over
- 10% of the enrolled participants have a severe disability
- 6% of the enrolled participants are individuals who have been formerly incarcerated
- 5% of the enrolled participants are frail

#### F. FORMERLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS, AS DEFINED IN TEGL 17-20

6% of the enrolled participants are formerly incarcerated individuals.

#### 7. A DESCRIPTION OF THE STEPS TAKEN TO AVOID DISRUPTIONS TO THE GREATEST EXTENT POSSIBLE, WHEN POSITIONS ARE REDISTRIBUTED, AS PROVIDED IN 20 CFR 641.365; WHEN NEW CENSUS OR OTHER RELIABLE DATA BECOME AVAILABLE; OR WHEN THERE IS OVER-ENROLLMENT FOR ANY OTHER REASON. (20 CFR 641.325(I), 641.302(B))

Disruptions in service have not historically been a problem in Alaska's SCSEP. Yet this past year, the program had many disruptions around the pandemic affecting participants' services, as participants were asked to shelter in place, host agencies closed, or due to being in close contact. The starts and stops are still ongoing. Under-enrollment continues to be the significant issue statewide due to agency shutdowns, lack of in-person supervisors, and senior concerns about their health by being in public settings. In order to prevent disruptions in service, both the AJC and SCSEP staff continue to assist those participants affected by the pandemic. Many are moving forward and are working in their community service assignment towards their employment goal.

When disruption of services occurs, meetings with affected local host sites and participants are scheduled to outline possible scenarios for minimizing potential impacts. Budget revisions could be made to subrecipients' funding allocations to alleviate under- or over-funding. This process also occurs at mid-year to adjust regions with the greatest needs from those regions that do not need the funding awarded. This effort, if necessary, would occur immediately, depending on the specific situation. The determination of where positions need to be relocated and how urgent the situation is will be the basis for the state's decisions. In order to address the issues of disruption of service, teleconferences with all affected parties would be scheduled to discuss the issues and to keep all parties informed.

Alaska SCSEP and job centers are open to the public and are providing a wide array of employment and training services designed to get job seekers the jobs they want and employers the workers they need.

### PERFORMANCE INDICATOR APPENDIX

#### ALL WIOA CORE PROGRAMS

##### All WIOA Core Programs

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.

#### ADDITIONAL INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE

Additional Indicators of Performance
Alaska is not including any additional performance indicators in its plan.

## OTHER APPENDICES

### Appendix 2.1 Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
AAE	Alaska Adult Education
ABLE	Achieving A Better Life Experience Act
ACA	Alaska Construction Academy
ACoA	Alaska Commission on Aging
ACPE	Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education
ACRE	Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AEFLA	Adult Education and Family Literacy Act
AITC	Alaska Interagency Transition Council
AIVRS	American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services
AJC	Alaska Job Center
AJCN	Alaska Job Center Network
ANCET	Alaska Native Coalition for Employment and Training
AOP	Agricultural Outreach Plan
APCA	Alaska Primary Care Association
ARDOR	Alaska Regional Development Organization
ASA	Alaska Safety Alliance
ASL	American Sign Language
AT	Assistive Technology
ATLA	Assistive Technologies of Alaska

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Definition</b>
ATOP	Alaska Transition Outreach Project
AVTEC	Alaska Vocational Technical Center
AWARE	DVR's case management software
AWIB	Alaska Workforce Investment Board
BEP	Business Enterprise Program
BEST	Business Employment Services Team
CCER	Center for Continuing Education in Rehabilitation at University of Washington
CCR	College and Career Readiness
CRC	Certified Rehabilitation Counselor
CRP	Certified Rehabilitation Provider
CSBG	Community Services Block Grant
CSNA	Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment
CSPD	Comprehensive System of Personnel Development
CSTS	Career Support and Training Services
CTE	Career and Technical Education
CWIC	Community Work Incentives Coordinator
DBH	Division of Behavioral Health
DCCED	Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development
DCRA	Division of Community and Regional Affairs under DCCED
DEED	Department of Education & Early Development
DEI	Disability Employment Initiative
DETS	Division of Employment and Training Services under DOLWD
DHSS	Department of Health & Social Services
DJJ	Division of Juvenile Justice
DOC	Department of Corrections
DOLWD	Department of Labor and Workforce Development
DPA	Division of Public Assistance

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Definition</b>
DRC	Disability Resource Coordinator
DSDS	Division of Senior and Disability Services
DVOP	Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program
DVR	Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
EGrAMS	Electronic Grants Administration and Management System
ES	Employment Service
ESL	English as a Second Language
ETA	Employment and Training Administration (USDOL)
ETPL	Eligible Training Provider List
FASD	Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FFY	Federal Fiscal Year
GED	General Educational Development
GPRA	Government Performance and Results Act (Employment and Training Administration)
HUD	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
I/DD	Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
IELCE	Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education
IEP	Individual Employment Plan or Individual Education Program
IL	Independent Living
IPE	Individualized Plan for Employment
ISER	University of Alaska's Institute of Social and Economic Research
ISS	Individual Service Strategies
ITA	Individual Training Account
JBER	Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson
JVSG	Jobs for Veterans State Grant
LEA	Local Education Agency
LVER	Local Veterans' Employment Representative



<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Definition</b>
MASST	Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSD	Most Significant Disabilities
MSFW	Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers
NFJP	National Farmworker Jobs Program
NRLI	National Rehabilitation Leadership Institute
OA	USDOL Office of Apprenticeship for Alaska
OAA	Older Americans Act
OCS	Office of Children's Services
OJT	On-the-Job Training
PETS	Pre-Employment Transition Services
PFD	Permanent Fund Dividend
PH	Provisional Hires
POS	Priority of Service
PY	Program Year
Pre-ETS	Pre-Employment Transition Services
RA	Registered Apprenticeship
RCE	Rehabilitation Counseling Education
REF	Renewable Energy Fund
RESEA	Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment
Rapid Response	Rapid Response
RSA	Rehabilitation Services Administration
RTC	Regional Training Center
SAE	State Apprenticeship Expansion Grant from USDOL
SARA	Semi-Autonomous Research Assistant
SCSEP	Senior Community Service Employment Program
SCAHEC	South Central Area Health Education Center
SE	Supported Employment

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Definition</b>
SFY	State Fiscal Year (July 1 to June 30)
SMA	State Monitor Advocate
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
SPARQ	SCSEP Performance and Results Quarterly Progress Report System
STEP	State Training and Employment Program
SVRC	State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee
SWA	State Workforce Agency
TAA	Trade Adjustment Assistance
TAARA	Trade Adjustment Assistance Reauthorization Act
TABE	Test of Adult Basic Education
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
TTY	Text Telephone
TVEP	Technical Vocational Education Program
TVR	Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation
UA	University of Alaska System
UAA	University of Alaska Anchorage
UAF	University of Alaska Fairbanks
UAS	University of Alaska Southeast
UI	Unemployment Insurance
USDOL	United States Department of Labor
VI	Visually Impaired
VOS	Virtual One-Stop
VR	Vocational Rehabilitation
VR&E	Vocational Rehabilitation & Education
VRC	Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
WIA	Workforce Investment Act of 1998
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

## **Appendix 2.2 Mandatory and Optional One-Stop Delivery System Partners**

WIOA Title I – Adult and Dislocated Worker
Organization: Department of Labor and Workforce Development; Division of Employment and

WIOA Title I – Adult and Dislocated Worker
Training Services
<p>Website: <a href="http://labor.alaska.gov/dets/wioa_adult.htm">http://labor.alaska.gov/dets/wioa_adult.htm</a></p> <p><a href="http://labor.alaska.gov/dets/wioa_dislocated.htm">http://labor.alaska.gov/dets/wioa_dislocated.htm</a></p> <p>Contact : James Harvey, Division Operations Manager</p> <p>Phone: (907) 465-4891, Email: <a href="mailto:james.harvey@alaska.gov">james.harvey@alaska.gov</a></p>
Program Authority: WIOA Chapter 1, Sec. 121, (b) One-Stop Partners, (1)
<p>The Adult program improves the quality of the adult workforce, reduces welfare dependency, and enhances the productivity and competitiveness of Alaska’s workforce. The program provides adults with workforce preparation; career services, training services and job placement assistance needed to increase occupational skill attainment, obtain industry-recognized credentials, and secure a good job that provides earnings that lead to self-sufficiency.</p> <p>The Dislocated Worker Program provides a variety of services to workers who have been impacted by plant closures, workforce reductions, and natural disasters that lead to job loss. The goal is to provide dislocated workers with the tools and support needed to obtain credentials and occupational skills leading to jobs in high growth industries and high demand occupations. The program enhances the quality, productivity and competitiveness of Alaska’s workforce while meeting the needs of Alaska’s employers.</p>

WIOA Title I – Youth Program
Organization: Department of Labor and Workforce Development; Alaska Workforce Investment Board
<p>Website: <a href="http://labor.alaska.gov/dets/wioa_youth.htm">http://labor.alaska.gov/dets/wioa_youth.htm</a></p> <p>Contact: Greg Cashen, Assistant Director</p> <p>Phone: (907) 269-3569, Email: <a href="mailto:greg.cashen@alaska.gov">greg.cashen@alaska.gov</a></p>
Program Authority: WIOA Chapter 1, Sec. 121, (b) One-Stop Partners, (1)
<p>The WIOA Youth program is designed to help disadvantaged or disconnected in-school youth ages 14-18 and out-of-school youth ages 16-24, gain access to employment, education, training, and support services needed to succeed and compete in today’s global economy. WIOA Youth projects provide a variety of services and activities leading to: the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, or a recognized postsecondary credential; postsecondary education and training opportunities; academic and vocational instruction; attainment of an industry recognized occupational credential; preparation for unsubsidized employment opportunities; connections to employers, in in-demand industry sectors and local and regional labor markets; and supportive services.</p>

WIOA Title II – Alaska Adult Education
Organization: Department of Labor and Workforce Development; Division of Employment and

WIOA Title II – Alaska Adult Education
Training Services
Website: <a href="http://jobs.alaska.gov/aae/">http://jobs.alaska.gov/aae/</a>  Contact: Windy Swearingin, AAE Program Director Phone: (907) 465-8714, Email: <a href="mailto:windy.swearingin@alaska.gov">windy.swearingin@alaska.gov</a>
Program Authority: WIOA Chapter 1, Sec. 121, (b) One-Stop Partners, (1)(B)(iii) Adult Education and Literacy activities authorized under WIOA Title II
<p>The Alaska Adult Education Program (AAE) is a statewide instructional program for adults seeking to enhance their postsecondary education skills in order to transition into employment. The goal of the AAE is to identify student's educational level and facilitate a successful transition to postsecondary education, training, or employment. Adult Education Programs instruct student in basic skills, high school equivalency diploma attainment, English language acquisition, and workforce preparation courses.</p> <p>The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) and WIOA Title II require the State of Alaska to provide eligible agencies a multiyear grant award. The competitive three-year grant cycle enables eligible providers to develop, implement, and improve adult education and literacy activities within Alaska. Eligible providers must use funds to establish or operate programs that provide adult education and literacy activities, including programs that provide these activities concurrently.</p> <p>The Division annually receives general funds from the State of Alaska and a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to fund adult education regional programs. These programs provide foundational skills and English literacy instruction to assist students who are studying to improve their reading, writing, and math skills. Alaska Adult Education includes 13 regional education grants, an integrated correctional system, and a grant for Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE).</p>

WIOA Title III – Wagner Peyser Employment Services
Program: Department of Labor and Workforce Development; Division of Employment and Training Services
Job Seeker Resources: <a href="http://jobs.alaska.gov/jobseeker.htm">http://jobs.alaska.gov/jobseeker.htm</a>  Business Connection: <a href="http://jobs.alaska.gov/employer.htm">http://jobs.alaska.gov/employer.htm</a>  Contact: James Harvey, Division Operations Manager  Phone : (907) 465-4891, Email: <a href="mailto:james.harvey@alaska.gov">james.harvey@alaska.gov</a>
Program Authority: WIOA Chapter 1, Sec. 121, (b) One-Stop Partners, (1) Amendments to the Wagner-Peyser Act Programs (29 USC 49 et seq.)
The One-Stop delivery system collaborates with partners to create a seamless system of service delivery that will enhance access to services and improve long-term employment outcomes for

WIOA Title III – Wagner Peyser Employment Services
<p>individuals receiving assistance.</p> <p>Employment and training services are located in the One-Stop delivery system and provides universal access to workers, job seekers, and employers under one roof from easy-to-find locations. The delivery points for these services are through 14 job centers located throughout the state. Services include labor exchange, labor market information, job search, job referral and placement assistance, re-employment services to unemployment insurance claimants, and job fair and recruitment services to employers. More intensive services can include job seeker assessment of skill levels, abilities and aptitudes, career guidance when appropriate, job search workshops, and referral to intensive and training services.</p> <p>Services are delivered in one of three modes including self-service, facilitated self-help services, and staff-assisted service delivery.</p> <p>Apprenticeship specialists in the job centers provide information to employers on sponsoring an apprenticeship program. Apprenticeships allow employers to establish the standards of proficiency, while developing a local and loyal workforce. Any business that requires skilled employees can benefit from an apprenticeship.</p>

WIOA Title IV – Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Organization: Department of Labor and Workforce Development; Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Website: <a href="https://labor.alaska.gov/dvr/home.htm">https://labor.alaska.gov/dvr/home.htm</a>
Contact: Duane Mayes, Division Director, DVR Phone: (907) 334-5963, Email: <a href="mailto:duane.mayes@alaska.gov">duane.mayes@alaska.gov</a>
Program Authority: Rehabilitation Act, Title I, Parts A & B – Rehabilitation Services Commission (29 USC 720); WIOA Chapter 1, Sec. 121, (b) One-Stop Partners, (1)(B)(iv) programs authorized under Title I of Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 USC, 720)(other than section 112 or part C of title I of such Act (29 USC 732, 741).
DVR operates a statewide comprehensive, coordinated, effective, efficient, and accountable vocational rehabilitation program as an integral part of a statewide workforce development system; and to assess, plan, and provide vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities so that those individuals may prepare for and engage in competitive integrated employment consistent with their unique strengths, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.
<b>Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)</b>
Organization: Department of Labor and Workforce Development; Division of Employment and

WIOA Title IV – Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Training Services
<p>Website: <a href="http://labor.alaska.gov/masst/home.htm">http://labor.alaska.gov/masst/home.htm</a></p> <p>Contact: Margarita (Rita) Gray, MASST Program Coordinator</p> <p>Phone : (907) 465-4872  , Email: <a href="mailto:rita.gray@alaska.gov">rita.gray@alaska.gov</a></p>
<p>Program Authority: Older Americans Act, Title V – Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) (42 USC 3056)</p> <p>WIOA Chapter 1, Sec. 121, (b) One-Stop Partners, (1)(B)(v) activities under title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 USC 3056)</p>
<p>The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), known in Alaska as Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training (MASST), supports self-sufficiency and employment for workers aged 55 and older, by providing part-time, paid community service positions and work-based training for unemployed, low-income individuals, who are not work-ready. The program identifies strategies to ensure workers obtain the skills and competencies needed to obtain and maintain jobs that lead to self-sufficiency. Participants train in one of the following areas: office and administrative support, food preparation and service, retail, sales, custodial, transportation, community and social services, and health care. The program provides services through the job centers and subrecipient organizations. Each site works with host agencies to develop community service employment assignments, which provide participants with needed on-the-job training and skill development. This added expertise allows participants to pursue local employment opportunities.</p>

Veteran Services
Organization: Department of Labor and Workforce Development; Division of Employment and Training Services
<p>Website: <a href="http://jobs.alaska.gov/veterans">http://jobs.alaska.gov/veterans</a></p> <p>Contact: Nakita Mongar, Program Coordinator I</p> <p>Phone: (907) 269-3016, Email: <a href="mailto:nakita.mongar@alaska.gov">nakita.mongar@alaska.gov</a></p>
Program Authority: WIOA Title I – Veteran’s Workforce Programs – (29 USC 2913, 29 USC 2919, 38 USC 41)
<p>Veterans and eligible military spouses are offered specialized programs and opportunities to maximize training potential, employment, and retention. Veterans receive priority of services in all Job Centers. Veterans and eligible spouses with significant barriers to employment (SBE) and are assisted by specialized staff funded through the Jobs for Veterans Statewide Grant (JVSG).</p> <p>The Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists are housed in job centers located in areas with the highest veteran populations and provide in-depth interviewing and comprehensive assessments to identify employment goals, interim objectives, and appropriate</p>

<b>Veteran Services</b>
<p>services that will enable the veteran to meet his or her employment goals. If DVOP services are not available, referrals are made to appropriate partner programs such as Career Support and Training Services and Vocational Rehabilitation.</p> <p>The Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) establishes relationships with employers and facilitated the placement of veterans in meaningful employment. The LVER is a bridge between employers and veterans to recruit, hire, promote, and retain veteran hire.</p>
<b>Trade Adjustment Assistance</b>
<p>Organization: Department of Labor and Workforce Development; Division of Employment and Training Services</p> <p>Website: <a href="http://jobs.alaska.gov/TAA/index.html">http://jobs.alaska.gov/TAA/index.html</a></p> <p>Contact: Andrea Mogil, Program Coordinator I Phone: (907) 465-6275, Email: <a href="mailto:andrea.mogil@alaska.gov">andrea.mogil@alaska.gov</a></p> <p>Program Authority: WIOA Chapter 1, Sec. 121, (b) One-Stop Partners, (1)(B)(vii) activities authorized under Chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 USC 2271 et seq.); Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) (19 USC 2317) and North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (19 USC 2271); Trade Act of 1974 (19 USC 2101 et seq.), Title II, Chapter 2, as amended in 2002, 2009, 2011 and Trade Adjustment Assistance Reauthorization Act (TAARA 2015), TAA Final Rule, 20 CFR 618, TAA Reversion 2021 (TEGL 24-20).</p> <p>The Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program provides training and employment services to workers who were laid-off or had a reduction in hours or pay due to foreign trade-related circumstances including competition from imported goods or work outsourced to a different country. The program identifies trade-affected worker groups and coordinates with stakeholders to provide qualified individuals with employment, training, and support services; job search and relocation allowances; weekly income support when unemployment insurance is fully exhausted, and workers who are 50 years of age and older with a wage subsidy to help bridge the salary gap between old and new employment. In Alaska, those workers eligible for TAA benefits were workers displaced by petroleum, timber, or fishing industries.</p>

<b>Unemployment Insurance</b>
<p>Organization: Department of Labor and Workforce Development; Division of Employment and Training Services</p> <p>Website: <a href="http://labor.alaska.gov/unemployment/">http://labor.alaska.gov/unemployment/</a></p> <p>Contact: Clifford Napier, Assistant Director,</p> <p>Phone: (907) 269-3742</p> <p>Email : <a href="mailto:clifford.napier@alaska.gov">clifford.napier@alaska.gov</a></p> <p>Program Authority: Unemployment Insurance (UI) – (5 USC 85) (ORC Chapter 4141)</p>

Unemployment Insurance
WIOA Chapter 1, Sec. 121, (b) One-Stop Partners, (1)(B)(xi) programs authorized under state unemployment compensation laws (in accordance with applicable Federal law).
Alaska's UI Program is committed to providing support to the One-Stop centers through referrals to Reemployment Services Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) activities and dedicated UI staff available to respond to the needs of unemployed workers coming into the One-Stop centers. Alaska UI already requires mandatory registration and provides Rapid Response program activities jointly with Alaska Job Center staff.

RurAL CAP
Organization: Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development; Division of Community and Regional Affairs
Website: <a href="https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/dcra/">https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/dcra/</a>  <a href="https://ruralcap.com">https://ruralcap.com</a>  Contact: Tiel Smith, Chief Executive Officer  Phone: (907) 279-2511, Email: <a href="mailto:tsmith@ruralcap.org">tsmith@ruralcap.org</a>
Program Authority: RurAL CAP is the only eligible Community Action Agency in the State of Alaska that is eligible to receive CSBG funds. State Assurance '676(b)(5); WIOA Chapter 1, Sec. 121, (b) One-Stop Partners, (1)(B)(ix) employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 USC 9901 et seq.).
State Assurance '676(b)(5): and the eligible entities in the state will coordinate, and establish linkages between, governmental and other social services programs to assure the effective delivery of such services to low-income individuals and to avoid duplication of such services, and state and the eligible entities will coordinate the provision of employment and training activities in the state and in communities with entities providing activities through statewide and local workforce investment systems under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. (WIA) RurAL CAP works extensively with state-related entities that receive funding under WIA. The Anchorage Services Division works with Nine Star, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, State Training and Employment Program, all GED completion programs, CITC, etc. to assist resident participants in reaching their employment goals. DOLWD assists with job applications. Residents are provided employment classes and Internet access to private companies that may be hiring. They are also provided transportation to employment-related activities and access to "day labor" jobs. The Planning and Construction Division hires individuals for the weatherization projects who have completed USDOL workforce training programs. DOLWD allows RurAL CAP to provide necessary training and technical assistance to their service partners and within their organization to meet the new standards in the CSBG program.

Alaska Housing Finance Corporation
Organization: Alaska Housing Finance Corporation; Jumpstart Program (Moving to Work)
Website: <a href="https://www.ahfc.us/publichousing/jumpstart">https://www.ahfc.us/publichousing/jumpstart</a>



Alaska Housing Finance Corporation
<p>Contact: Amanda (Mandi) Manning, Statewide Manager of the Self-Sufficiency Programs</p> <p>Phone : (907) 330-6100, Email: amanning@ahfc.us</p>
Program Authority: WIOA Chapter 1, Sec. 121, (b) One-Stop Partners, (1)(B)(x) employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
<p>AHFC is a Public Housing Division participating in the Moving to Work (MTW) Demonstration Program. As a Moving to Work Agency, AHFC has the flexibility to design and test various approaches for providing and administering housing assistance that reduce cost and achieve greater cost effectiveness in federal expenditures; give incentives to families with children whose heads of household are either working, seeking work, or are participating in job training, educational, or other programs that assist in obtaining employment and becoming economically self-sufficient; and increase housing choices for low-income families.</p> <p>With this MTW designation, AHFC's FY2014 MTW Annual Plan created Reasonable Rent and Family Self-Sufficiency initiatives. Under this program, families are divided into three classifications: Step, Classic and Set-Aside (vouchers designed to help designated groups such as veterans.) Families in the Classic program pay an income-based rent and see no time-limits on assistance. Families in the Step Program contain a work-able adult and do not meet the criteria for the Classic program. Under the Step program, families are limited to five (5) years of rental assistance and under the Step Rent/Subsidy schedule, the family's share of rent increases annually as AHFC's subsidy decreases. To serve participating families, AHFC expanded and improved on its Family Self-Sufficiency Program by creating the Jumpstart Program. The Jumpstart Program provides financial incentives for participation and/or completion of employment, education, and long-term financial activities along with intensive case management for families identified as having a high shelter burden (the cost of rent plus utilities). The objective of Jumpstart is to reduce the dependency of low-income families on welfare assistance and on Housing Choice Voucher, Public Housing, or any Federal, State, or Local rent or homeownership subsidies. AHFC measures the success of Jumpstart not only by the number of families who achieve self-sufficiency, but also by the number of Jumpstart families who, as a result of participation in the program have family members who obtain their first job;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>have family members who obtain higher paying jobs;</li> <li>no longer need benefits received under one or more welfare programs;</li> <li>obtain a high school diploma, General Educational Development (GED.) certificate, or higher education degree; or</li> <li>accomplish goals that assist the family in obtaining economic independence.</li> </ul> <p>AHFC case managers work with families to develop individualized goals, introduce or direct them to resources and support services that can assist in their progress toward meeting these goals, and follow-up on the family's progress. Local AHFC offices (16 locations statewide) regularly assist families in immediate need by referring them to resources and services. Referrals for employment assistance to One-Stop centers are a priority to assist with job training, preparation, and counseling; job development and placement; and follow-up assistance after job placement and completion of the contract of participation. AHFC coordinates closely with U.S. DOL to ensure non-duplication of services. AHFC also offers a suite</p>

Alaska Housing Finance Corporation
of job readiness classes on-site at its Anchorage location through the Gateway to Education, which include multi-class occupational endorsements, computer lab classes, and other foundational courses to assist in gaining skills for immediate job placement.

Department of Education and Early Development
Organization: Department of Education and Early Development; Career and Technical Education; Perkins Postsecondary Competitive Grant
Website: <a href="https://education.alaska.gov/cte">https://education.alaska.gov/cte</a>
Contact: Deborah Riddle, Division Operations Manager
Phone : (907) 465-2892, Email : <a href="mailto:deborah.riddle@alaska.gov">deborah.riddle@alaska.gov</a>
Program Authority: Postsecondary Vocational Education – Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act (20 USC 2301)
WIOA Chapter 1, Sec. 121, (b) One-Stop Partners, (1)(B)(vi) career and technical education programs at postsecondary level authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006.
DEED actively participates through the Perkins Postsecondary program, which is carried out in Alaska through a competitive grant process open to all eligible postsecondary partners. Perkins-funded postsecondary programs have in the past focused on professional development for CTE instructors. The current focus is on partnerships between secondary and postsecondary programs and industry, targeted at one or more of the high-priority industries. Programs either 1) provide secondary students with content-specific access to postsecondary career and technical education as dual-credit classes (at no cost to either the student or district) and make substantive links between secondary and postsecondary education and the workforce; or 2) provide professionals transitioning from the field into education with instructional skills specific to the secondary CTE classroom and are based on a clear program of study that results in participants receiving an industry certification upon completion

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
Organization: Department of Health and Social Services; Division of Public Assistance
Website: <a href="http://dhss.alaska.gov/dpa/Pages/atap">http://dhss.alaska.gov/dpa/Pages/atap</a>
Contact: Mark Walker, Public Assistance Programs Officer
Phone: (907) 352-4106 Email: <a href="mailto:mark.walker@alaska.gov">mark.walker@alaska.gov</a>
Program Authority: Social Security Act – Welfare to Work Programs (42 USC 603(a)(5)); WIOA Chapter 1, Sec. 121, (b) One-Stop Partners, (1)(B)(xiii) programs authorized under part A of Title IV of the Social Security Act (42 USC 601 et seq.), subject to subparagraph (C).
DPA provides TANF case management, referrals to community agencies, and financial supportive services. Items such as tools, scrubs, medical equipment, background checks and licenses can be purchased. Supportive Services may continue for 12 months post Temporary

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
Assistance if the client has earnings at the time of closure.

Alaska Job Corps Center
Organization: Alaska Job Corps Center
Website: <a href="https://alaska.jobcorps.gov/our-program">https://alaska.jobcorps.gov/our-program</a>
Contact Name: Malyn Smith, Director
Phone: (907) 861-8801, Email: <a href="mailto:smith.malyn@jobcorps.org">smith.malyn@jobcorps.org</a>
Program Authority: WIOA Public Law 113-128, Chapter 4, Subtitle C Job Corps, Section 148 Program Activities
Alaska Job Corps offers hands-on career technical training as well as academic training. Career technical training is available in the following industries: Hospitality, Construction, Health and Community Services. Academic training includes basic reading and math. Courses in independent living, employability skills, and social skills are offered in order to help students transition into the workplace. There are also several academic programs to help our students achieve their full potential. One of the top goals at the Alaska Job Corps is to ensure that every qualified student obtains his or her GED/high school diploma prior to leaving the center. Students who do not already have a high school diploma upon their arrival at Alaska Job Corps Center are automatically enrolled into our GED program. Students who complete this program's core classes may participate in the high school diploma program, which is an on-center program. Pre-requisites for the high school diploma program are the student must have fifteen or more credits, and the student must have passed at least two high school qualifying exams (HSQEs). Driver's education is available to all students needing an Alaska driver's license. Permits and licensing fees for students are paid for by the center. Arrangements for students to take the written and road examinations are also handled by the center. The Alaska Job Corps Center also offers a college program where students can enroll in Advanced Career Training (ACT) and attend the Mat-Su College in Palmer.

Alaska Native Coalition on Employment and Training (ANCET)
Organization: Coalition of 10 Alaska Native organizations, see list below
Website: <a href="https://www.doleta.gov/dinap/directories/477list/">https://www.doleta.gov/dinap/directories/477list/</a>
Program Authority: WIOA Subtitle D National Programs, Section 166 Native American Programs, includes grantees of Public Law 102-477 Indian Employment, Training, and Related Services Demonstration Act of 1992, as amended by Public Law 106-568, the Omnibus Indian Advancement Act of 2000.

Alaska Native Coalition on Employment and Training (ANCET)
29 USC 3221 – Native American programs (all programs under this section administered consistent with 25 USC 450 et seq. Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act)
<p>Alaska Native Coalition on Employment and Training, representing DOL-WIOA Funded Federally Recognized Tribes and Alaska Native Entities Participating in Public Law 102-477</p> <p><a href="https://www.doleta.gov/dinap/directories/477list/">https://www.doleta.gov/dinap/directories/477list/</a></p> <p>The majority of the Alaska Native partners participating in employment and training workforce development activities (pursuant to WIOA Subtitle D, Sec. 166 Native American Programs; Public Law 102-477 Indian Employment Training, and Related Services Demonstration Act of 1992, as amended by Public Law 106-568, the Omnibus Indian Advancement Act of 2000), provide these services:</p> <p>The emphasis for the majority of participating Alaska Native partners</p>

Alaska Native Coalition on Employment and Training (ANCET)

involves these activities:

Job Seeker Services – Emphasis on self-service, staff assisted career services including resume and cover letter, interview skills, careers, jobs, labor market information, workshops, labor exchange, education programs, support, Unemployment Insurance (UI), eligibility screening and referral process. Eligible individuals have access to case management for services such as intake and registration testing and assessment, Individual Employment Plans (IEPs), vocational counseling, short term pre-vocational services, training services, adult education and literacy activities, scholarships, and supplemental training funds for eligible individuals for supportive services, e.g., childcare, transportation, and clothing.

Services to Employers – Labor exchange, marketing, and workforce information.

Purpose: To support employment and training activities for Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian individuals in order to:

Alaska Native Coalition on Employment and Training (ANCET)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop more fully the academic, occupational, and literacy skills of such individuals;</li> <li>• Make such individuals more competitive in the workforce and to equip them with the entrepreneurial skills necessary for successful self-employment;</li> <li>• Promote the economic and social development of Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities in accordance with the goals and values of such communities.</li> <li>• Identify the education and employment needs of the population to be served and the manner in which the activities to be provided will strengthen the ability of the individuals served to obtain or retain unsubsidized employment leading to self-sufficiency;</li> <li>• Consider the needs of the groups served by this section, including differences in needs among such groups in various geographic service areas; and the economic circumstances of the communities served, including differences in circumstances among various geographic service areas.</li> <li>• Highlight additional workforce development activities provided by partners (as shown on their public web pages) include but are not limited to the following organizations represented by ANCET:</li> </ul>		
Aleutian-Pribilof Islands Assn., Inc. (APIA)	<a href="https://www.apiai.org/services/employment-services/">https://www.apiai.org/services/employment-services/</a>	AANG Program assists eligible individuals prepare for,

Alaska Native Coalition on Employment and Training (ANCET)		gain, or retain employment scholarship opportunities to individuals attending a college or university full time, working towards a 2 or 4-year degree; training scholarships for non-degree training, vocational training and certification courses.
Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP)	<a href="https://www.avcp.org/child-care/">https://www.avcp.org/child-care/</a>	The Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP), Education, Employment, Training and Child Care Department's (EET & CC) outreach is a key component to informing and educating member tribes of the programs they have available, and for any Native American living in the AVCP region, who is enrolled in a federally recognized tribe. AVCP's EET & CC Department also maintains a regional Talent Bank, a file of

Alaska Native Coalition on Employment and Training (ANCET)		individuals from within the region. When a project comes to a village, they encourage local hire by looking through the Bank and identify any individuals from that community who might be qualified and appropriate for hiring on to specific jobs.
Bristol Bay Native Association (BBNA)	<a href="https://www.bbna.com/our-programs/workforce-development/">https://www.bbna.com/our-programs/workforce-development/</a>	Training assistance grants are available for adults attending a vocational or technical training certificate program ranging in length from 6 months to 2 years, for a wide variety of fields working towards a career goal. These include Driver's Education to achieve a Driver's License, Heavy Equipment Operating, Commercial Truck Driver License (CDL), Certified Nurse's Aide, Child Care Associate Certificate or other short term



Alaska Native Coalition on Employment and Training (ANCET)		occupation training leading directly to employment upon completion of the training.
Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes (CCHITA)	<a href="http://www.ccthita.org/services/employment/overview/index.html">http://www.ccthita.org/services/employment/overview/index.html</a>	<p>Employment Services provides eligible participants who complete career assessment testing, motivational training, and job skills workshops with an employment portfolio to use while actively seeking employment.</p> <p>The Job Placement program within the Employment &amp; Training (E&amp;T) Division offers motivational, cultural, and basic office skills trainings to TANF, TVR, ES, and AVT clients. The program offers educational, training and employment opportunities to assist in finding meaningful employment and maintaining a</p>

Alaska Native Coalition on Employment and Training (ANCET)	
	<p>healthy lifestyle independent of program services. Computer classroom training and vocational courses are offered to both tribal citizens and the general public through the Vocational Training &amp; Resource Center (VTRC).</p> <p>The Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) program with the State of Alaska (SOA), Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) jointly serves eligible applicants with disabilities in Southeast Alaska. Because TVR and DVR work together to provide joint services, tribal citizens are actively referred to the SOA/DVR offices.</p> <p>The Youth Employment Services (YES) program assists eligible tribal</p>

Alaska Native Coalition on Employment and Training (ANCET)		
		youth between the ages of 14-21 to obtain summer employment in their community and provides participating youth with Job & Life Skills Workshops including Job Hunting Tips, Completing an Application, Cover Letter, Resume, Interview Techniques, Surviving the Job, and Power of Choices.
Chugachmiut, Inc.	<a href="http://www.chugachmiut.org/health-social-services/social-services/vocational-training/">http://www.chugachmiut.org/health-social-services/social-services/vocational-training/</a>	Chugachmiut offers tuition assistance regarding vocational training to eligible Alaska Natives and American Indians. Applicants must reside in Chenega, Nanwalek, Port Graham, Seward or Tatitlek and demonstrate financial need due to unemployment or underemployment. The goal is to assist residents in obtaining long-term employment.

Alaska Native Coalition on Employment and Training (ANCET)		
Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC)	<a href="https://citci.org/employmenttraining/">https://citci.org/employmenttraining/</a>	CITC's Employment Training and Services Department assists participants in achieving self-sufficiency by helping them enhance their communication, life management, vocational and academic skills. CITC also provides vocational rehabilitation services and operates a One-Stop called Alaska's People Career Development Center. CITC's comprehensive wrap-around services include GED, TANF, GA, childcare, and career training. The DOLWD is co-located at the CITC Career Development Center and partners with CITC staff to offer services to assist job seekers with training and employment.
Kawerak, Inc.	<a href="https://kawerak.org/">https://kawerak.org/</a>	The Kawerak Direct Employment (DE) Program

Alaska Native Coalition on Employment and Training (ANCET)

provides a one-time grant to eligible tribal members who reside in the Bering Strait-Norton Sound region to assist with employment related needs and start-up living expenses in order to retain full-time employment.

The Higher Education Program provides semester and quarterly scholarships to tribal members of the Bering Strait region that are enrolled at an accredited college or university.

Kawerak Native Employment Work Services (KNEWS) provides Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). KNEWS partners with the Division of Public Assistance to provide services

Alaska Native Coalition on Employment and Training (ANCET)

to the villages in the Bering Strait Region. Because there is a shortage of paid positions in village communities, KNEWS works with local organizations to provide volunteer work opportunities for clients to gain job skills.

Kawerak offers village-based carpentry and heavy equipment training programs. These 2-4 week programs are designed for apprentices who are registered by the USDOL. Each training program uses a standard curriculum that is approved by the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER). Participants earn college-credit through Northwest College/University of Alaska. Training

Alaska Native Coalition on Employment and Training (ANCET)		
		<p>programs are not limited to carpentry and heavy equipment and are determined on a village-by-village basis. Village Based Training works with the IRAs of each village to determine what job opportunities are coming to the village or what skills need to be upgraded to increase or keep village residents employed in the near future. Training is then recommended. Funding sources, trainers and other resources are prioritized to the best advantage of the region. Village Based training and all of EET, work to keep each village in the rotation of ongoing training, without favoritism.</p>
Kodiak Native Association (KANA)	<a href="http://kodiakhealthcare.org/community-services/cs-employment-education/">http://kodiakhealthcare.org/community-services/cs-employment-education/</a>	<p>Kodiak Area Native Association (KANA) operates the KANA Employment Center which offers access to</p>

Alaska Native Coalition on Employment and Training (ANCET)

computers to search for jobs, create resumes, information on college, trade schools and apply for scholarships. Life and employment skills workshops are offered. The Supplemental Youth Employment Training Program (SYETP) provides practical work experience for Kodiak area Native youth, aged 14-24, to build strong communities by providing the life experience they need. Youth placed in a successful match with a business are added to KANA's payroll for up to 100 hours, also making them eligible for a half work Co-op credit at Kodiak High School. The Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Program (TVRP) assists Alaska Native and American Indian individuals who are members of a federally



Alaska Native Coalition on Employment and Training (ANCET)		recognized tribe that experience disabilities prepare for, achieve, and maintain employment.
Maniilaq Association	<a href="https://www.maniilaq.org/">https://www.maniilaq.org/</a>	The goal of Maniilaq Employment & Training Program is to assist in providing training to the people of the Northwest Arctic region into gainful employment and to be economically self-sufficient. Case workers assist each client in funding resources and case management, need assessments, and training needs to achieve employment, apprenticeship, on-the-job training, or supportive services.
Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC)	<a href="https://www.tananachiefs.org/job-seekers/job-training/">https://www.tananachiefs.org/job-seekers/job-training/</a>	In addition to workforce development activities listed above, TCC also has AmeriCorps and VISTA programs. TCC

Alaska Native Coalition on Employment and Training (ANCET)	<p>announces job openings, trainings, and other job openings around the State of Alaska. The TCC Youth Employment Program offers year-round and summer-only work experience opportunities for 14-21 year-olds. TCC operates a Tribal Employment Rights Office (TERO) through adoption of local village ordinances and helps ensure maximum Native hire on or near Indian Lands. TCC Youth Employment Services empowers Native youth facing barriers to employment by providing work experience, training and educational opportunities designed to foster world-of-work skills.</p>
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